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John Wood

E. Finden

Our Saviour.

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OUR SAVIOUR

WITH

PROPHETS AND APOSTLES.

A SERIES OF

Eighteen Highly Finished Steel Engravings,

DESIGNED EXPRESSLY FOR THIS WORK.

WITH

DESCRIPTIONS BY SEVERAL AMERICAN DIVINES.

EDITED BY

THE REV. J. M. WAINWRIGHT, D. D.

NEW-YORK :

D. APPLETON & COMPANY, 200 BROADWAY.

PHILADELPHIA :

GEO. S. APPLETON, 164 CHESNUT-STREET.

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TO
CHRISTIANS
OF EVERY NAME,
THIS
IMPERFECT ATTEMPT TO PORTRAY
Our Blessed Saviour,
AND
SOME OF THOSE INSPIRED MEN
WHO
PRECEDED AND FOLLOWED
HIS ADVENT,
IS
RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED.

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C O N T E N T S .

SUBJECTS.	AUTHORS.	PAGE.
OUR SAVIOUR,	REV. J. M. WAINWRIGHT, D. D., .	13
JOHN THE BAPTIST,	REV. WILLIAM ADAMS, D. D., . .	25
ST. MATTHEW,	REV. HENRY W. BELLOWES. . . .	35
ST. MARK,	REV. SAMUEL R. JOHNSON, D. D., .	45
ST. LUKE,	REV. C. A. BARTOL,	57
ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST, .	REV. W. E. WYATT, D. D., . . .	65
ST. PETER,	REV. W. HAGUE, D. D.,	85
ST. PAUL,	REV. SAMUEL H. TURNER, D. D., .	97
ST. ANDREW,	REV. JOHN LEE WATSON,	117
ST. STEPHEN,	RIGHT REV. A. G. SPENCER, D. D.,	125
ST. THOMAS,	REV. A. W. VINTON, D. D., . . .	131
ST. BARNABAS,	REV. JOHN O. CHOULES, D. D., . .	143
ST. SIMEON,	REV. MILO MAHAN,	147
DAVID,	REV. ASA D. SMITH, D. D., . . .	155
SOLOMON,	REV. N. L. FROTHINGHAM, D. D., .	179
ISAIAH,	REV. CHARLES BURROUGHS, D. D.,	191
EZEKIEL,	REV. FRANCIS VINTON, D. D., . .	207
MALACHI,	REV. JAMES SCOTT, D. D., . . .	225

LIST OF PLATES.

SUBJECT.	ENGRAVER.
I. OUR SAVIOUR,	E. FINDEN.
II. JOHN THE BAPTIST,	E. FINDEN.
III. ST. MATTHEW,	E. FINDEN.
IV. ST. MARK,	E. FINDEN.
V. ST. LUKE,	W. H. MOTE.
VI. ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST,	E. FINDEN.
VII. ST. PETER,	E. FINDEN.
VIII. ST. PAUL,	E. FINDEN.
IX. ST. ANDREW,	B. EYLES.
X. ST. STEPHEN,	C. COOK.
XI. ST. THOMAS,	B. EYLES.
XII. ST. BARNABAS,	C. COOK.
XIII. ST. SIMEON,	W. H. MOTE.
XIV. DAVID,	B. EYLES.
XV. SOLOMON,	W. H. MOTE.
XVI. ISAIAH,	W. H. EGLETON.
XVII. EZEKIEL,	W. H. MOTE.
XVIII. MALACHI,	W. H. EGLETON.

P R E F A C E .

THE very general approbation with which the "Women of the Bible," and the "Women of the Old and New Testament" have been received for two successive years, encouraged the undertaking of a similar work which is now respectfully offered to the public. The selection of subjects is not precisely that which would have been preferred by the editor or the publishers. Some characters, especially from amongst those which the Old Testament so richly supplies, have been omitted which it would have been their choice to introduce; and one or two from the New Testament might, in their judgment, have given place to others of more prominent interest. But as the pictorial designs were to be original, and to be prepared expressly for this work, the pencil of the artist was not placed under any degree of restraint, and he was left to choose what his fancy might dictate with the simple instruction that the Men of the Bible was to be his

P R E F A C E.

field of selection. Where the range of subjects is so extensive, and the number to be chosen limited to eighteen, it would be unreasonable to expect that all tastes should agree in that choice. While some little difference of judgment in regard to this point may therefore be anticipated amongst our readers, we feel confident that they will coincide with us in the more important one of according to the artist a high degree of praise for the masterly style in which he has executed what he undertook. The individual characters in this collection are well imagined and effectively delineated. Of the engraving, too, of these appropriate designs we feel authorized to speak in terms of unqualified approbation. In regard to one of the subjects chosen by the artist it is necessary to make a brief explanation. It will be observed, that in connection with the picture of St. Simon, is given an account of St. Simeon. This discrepancy arose from the fact that the article was written before the pictorial design was received, and the impression was that the artist was to give us a representation of the "just and devout" man who "waited for the consolation of Israel," and who as in the temple he took the infant Saviour in his arms, "blessed God and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Instead of this the less prominent, and, as it seems to us, less interesting character of Simon Zelotes was depicted. But we could not consent to set aside the beautiful and striking article with which we have been favored, even had there been time to correct the misunderstanding by soliciting another from

P R E F A C E.

our respected contributor. Our readers, we feel confident, will not complain; and we trust that our author will excuse the absence of a strictly appropriate illustration in consideration of having assigned to him the more interesting subject. In two other instances similar difficulties occurred, but in abundant time for their removal; and we have to express our sincere gratitude to the gentlemen who have relieved us from the embarrassment, by each promptly and cheerfully preparing for us a second article.

Of the different literary contributions of which this volume is composed, and which constitute its chief value, it would be needless, if indeed it would not be presumptuous, for us to express an opinion. The names of their respective authors are an abundant assurance to the public that they are as worthy of their sacred themes as human compositions well can be. In the present, as well as in regard to their former kindred publications, it is sufficient in behalf of the publishers to say, that they esteem themselves highly favored in the distinguished professional ability with which they have been assisted in their effort to produce works not inferior to any of those which form the contributions to our annual literature, and which also, by their intrinsic value, deserve a permanent place in a well selected library.

Upon thus coming to the conclusion of his task, it only remains for the editor to express his respectful thanks to the reverend gentlemen who have so cheerfully and so efficiently co-operated with him; and to say, that if the readers of this volume shall receive

P R E F A C E .

even a measure of the satisfaction and instruction he has derived from superintending its publication, they will be more than content with its possession.

JONA. M. WAINWRIGHT.

NEW-YORK, August, 1850.

OUR SAVIOUR.

BY THE REV. J. M. WAINWRIGHT, D. D.

THE artist drawing from his store of sketches the forms of feature and varieties of expression with which the "human face divine" is stamped, by the mind and the affections, selects and combines those which image to him the inspired delineation of individual character; and then his practised hand depicts what we readily accept as a resemblance of David or Isaiah, of St. Peter or St. Paul. Thus do the engravings with which this volume is embellished profess to be *portraits* of the imagination—if we may be permitted thus to employ a term which, strictly speaking, is applicable only to what is drawn from real life. One exception, however, must be made. In relation to this one we may ask, what power of imagination, what skill of art could avail to represent, in a satisfactory manner, HIM, of whom the prophet says: "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him;"* and whom the Apostle declares to be "the image of the invisible God,"† "the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person;"‡ and

* Isaiah, 53: 2.

† Colossians, 1: 15.

‡ Hebrews, 1: 3.

OUR SAVIOUR.

"Who, being in the form of God, made himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." * These expressions, indeed, are intended chiefly, and perhaps exclusively, to apply to spiritual characteristics; but yet they force themselves upon us when we endeavor to imagine what was the bodily likeness of the Son of God when he humbled himself to our nature. Therefore, a spirit of reverence and humility, as we would believe, forbidding the attempt to draw a portraiture of "OUR SAVIOUR," and preferring to shadow forth one of His manifestations, has selected that which closed His visible appearance on earth, and showed Him to the apostles as "He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight." † This choice shall direct and limit the writer's thoughts; and, in view of the boundless theme suggested by the *title* of the frontispiece, he finds relief in confining himself to its *subject*.

While meditating upon this sublime act, the attention is specially drawn to the time at which it took place. Not until forty days after His rising from the dead did our Lord ascend into Heaven. What could be the reason of this long delay? we are moved to inquire. Why did he not, having conquered death, mount with unimpeded progress? He seemed to have done and suffered the will of his Heavenly Father. He had fulfilled the ancient prophecies; proved Himself to be the Messiah; given to the world a pure and perfect religion, and made the great Atonement. What more remained to be done to detain Him from the home which He had left on an errand of love? In answer to these suggestions we reply, that the design of the mission of Christ was not alone to establish a new system of religion, nor to provide a sacrifice for our sins, but also to prove beyond

* Philippians 2: 6, 7.

† Acts 1: 9.

OUR SAVIOUR.

the possibility of a reasonable doubt, the truth of a resurrection from the dead. Because this single fact is the keystone of Christianity. Remove it and the whole fabric crumbles. Upon it depend the authority of Christ as a messenger sent from God, the assurance that He is accepted as the propitiation for our sins, and the proof of an immortal life beyond the grave. Such is the infinite importance of this fact, that the Apostle Paul tells his Corinthian converts, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain."* Now in order to establish this fact, it was necessary to give satisfactory evidence that one who had been laid a corpse in the grave was again enabled to exercise the functions of a living man.

Had the Saviour, then, gone up into heaven as soon as He left the tomb, or had He tarried upon the earth a few hours only, the proof of His resurrection would have been comparatively weak and insufficient. To the Jews, the story would have seemed more probable that His disciples had stolen Him away, to give the color of truth to His assertions. And the disciples themselves could hardly have been persuaded of the fact of the resurrection. Their minds, we know, were in a remarkable state of darkness with respect to the nature and the object of the mission of Christ. So far from being accessary, as the Chief-priest and the rulers of the Jews asserted, to the fraud of secreting the lifeless body of their Master, they had not as yet been made to understand that the resurrection from the dead was a doctrine which He taught, and was to prove in His own person. The evidence of the fact they at last received with almost inconceivable backwardness. Thomas declared to the other disciples, who told him they had seen the Lord, "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and

* 1 Corinthians 15: 14.

OUR SAVIOUR.

put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe." *

At first view, it may appear very singular that the immediate attendants upon our Lord during His ministry, should not have recognized the prophecies concerning His rising from the dead on the third day, while the Jews understood them so well that they took the precaution of having a guard placed over the sepulchre, lest the apostles should clandestinely remove the body.† Such an inconsistency, some have said, militates against the truth of the whole history. But, how superficial and short-sighted is all this reasoning! Take into consideration the circumstances of the case, and it will be found that instead of being a weak place in the history, this seeming contradiction strengthens the truth of the whole. The unbelief of the apostles, except upon ocular demonstration, that their Master had risen again, removes all reasonable suspicion of their being concerned, as was asserted by some of the Jews, in stealing the body. So far from thus attempting to deceive the world, they did not themselves know, or even imagine, until they had seen Him, conversed with Him, and beheld in Him all the restored functions of life, that Jesus was to rise on the third day. And we may reasonably conclude, that, for the very purpose of giving this irresistible proof of their innocence of that accusation, they were suffered to attach incorrect ideas to our Saviour's words, when He spoke of His resurrection. When the awful scene of Calvary was finished, the hopes of the disciples were utterly destroyed. They might, indeed, retain their love for their Master, as a man, but they had entirely lost their faith in Him as the Messiah. They looked only for a temporal deliverer from the Roman yoke; but the crucifixion and death of Jesus, put their fond expectations to flight, and they retired in despair.

* John 20: 25.

† Matt. 27: 62—66.

OUR SAVIOUR.

We begin now to see why our Saviour tarried yet upon the earth after his resurrection. It was to strengthen and animate His drooping followers,—to give new assurance to their faith and new fire to their zeal, to convince them that He was indeed the conqueror of death, and to furnish them with such proofs that they should afterwards be able to persuade the world of this glorious truth. This inference we deduce from the language of the sacred historian. St. Luke expressly tells us that “He showed himself alive to the apostles after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.”* To convince them that it was himself and not a fancy of their disordered imagination, He appeared to them frequently, and held out to them His hands and feet pierced with the nails, and pointed to the wound in His side: “Behold my hands and my feet,” He said, “that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.”† On various occasions He ate, drank, and conversed with them. He showed himself to them singly and when they were collected together; and thus a proof was given of his being alive, after having been crucified, dead, and buried, as clear and positive as the conviction that they had held daily intercourse with Him for the space of three years before these events.

In the progress of this intercourse, moreover, we are assured that He gave them much instruction, and intrusted them with many directions in relation to their future responsible duties, when He, through the Spirit, should lay the foundations of His Church. After the crucifixion, their minds were yet dark and uninformed upon many points of the deepest importance. They were ignorant of the spiritual nature of their Master’s kingdom, of the true atonement for human

* Acts 1: 3.

† Luke 24: 39.

OUR SAVIOUR.

transgression, of the being and offices of the Holy Spirit, and of many other things pertaining to the new dispensation. These most essential truths were then poured in upon their minds during this momentous period, a period fraught with consequences to the apostles and through them to the world, of value unspeakable. What prejudices removed, what wonderful discoveries made, what bright and encouraging anticipations excited! How rich was every hour in hopes revived, thoughts spiritualized, and resolutions formed! When the forty days expired what a change was wrought in the timid, ignorant, and despairing disciples of Jesus! This great object accomplished, the time was come for our Saviour to leave this scene of His sufferings, and to re-assume that glory which He had with the Father before the world was. Now was the time to end His mission below, and to receive the glory consequent upon His humiliation, sufferings, and death. Accordingly, upon the fortieth day after His resurrection from the dead, in the presence of the eleven apostles, when He had given them His parting blessing, "He was taken up and a cloud received Him out of their sight."

Transport yourself, reader, for a moment to the scene of this sublime event, that you may realize, in some humble degree, the feelings of its spectators. After the awful tragedy of Calvary, they had supposed Him dead for ever. Dispersed, dejected, and, as they thought, forsaken, with what poignant regret did they look upon their ruined expectations! All the dreams of temporal prosperity with which they had been animated, were dissolved by the mournful reality that He who alone could bring them to pass was crucified, dead, and buried. The bitterest grief, too, would mingle with their disappointment; for they sincerely loved a Master so kind and gracious, one to whom they had been attached by a community of occupation and suffering, and with whom they had lived in most endearing inti-

OUR SAVIOUR.

macy. But now their grief has given way to the glad certainty that He is again with them. They see Him, they hear His voice, they are instructed by His wisdom, and comforted by His presence. But their reunion is only for a short period. They are hardly convinced of the reality of all they have seen and heard during the few days that fled so rapidly, ere they are again summoned to witness the final departure of their Lord and Master.

This transaction took place near Bethany, a small village a short distance from Jerusalem. "He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them; and it came to pass while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven."* And what are the feelings of the apostles at this moment? Are they now in despair? Do they now gaze after their ascending Lord with the consternation and distress with which they saw Him torn from them to be carried to the judgment seat of Pilate? Do they now look upon Him with the anguish which the beloved disciple felt when he stood a witness of the crucifixion? Do they again say, with expiring faith, "We trusted that it had been He who should have redeemed Israel?"† And do they now feel as though they were left friendless and comfortless, exposed, without encouragement or assistance, to the cruelties and persecutions of their enemies? No; the returning tide of emotion bears upon its waters consolation, peace, and joy. Dejection, grief, and fear, have vanished; courage, hope, and grateful praise now possess their hearts. As He ascended, the evangelist says, "they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and were continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God."‡

What wrought this marvellous change? What "gave unto them

* Luke 24: 50, 51.

† Luke 24: 21.

‡ Luke 24: 52, 53.

OUR SAVIOUR.

that mourned in Zion, beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness?"* We cannot doubt but that it was their intercourse with the Saviour during the period between His resurrection and ascension. He had "opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures." He had said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day."† He had recalled the promise, "I will not leave you comfortless," "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever."‡ Now, those words of Christ, dark and unintelligible before, beamed upon them with the brightness of joy and the cheerfulness of hope: "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also."§ They began to comprehend the true dignity of His character; and with delight, mingled with awe and admiration, they saw Him ascend to that glory which he had only left on a message of love to guilty man. They were assured that, although absent in the body, He was present with them by His Holy Spirit; and that even in heaven, He was still mindful of their dearest interests. He was no longer regarded by them as their Teacher, Master, Lord alone, but they beheld in Him their Redeemer, Saviour, Mediator, Intercessor. Invested with these characters, as He had on earth paid the heavy penalty for their sins, "He was able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them."|| Such were the consola-

* Isaiah 61: 3.

† John 14: 16.

|| Hebrews 7: 25.

‡ Luke 24: 46.

§ John 14: 1—3.

OUR SAVIOUR.

tions that banished grief from the hearts of the apostles; such the convictions that restored their courage; such the promises that inspired hope; such the declarations that established faith.

To us are opened the same sources of joy and peace in believing. In the ascension, we see placed upon the whole of our Lord's ministry, a seal, which in the most satisfactory manner attests its divine original. Did the apostles, notwithstanding all His mighty works, and all the wisdom of His teaching, well nigh reject His claim to be the Messiah, when they saw Him tried at the bar of the Roman Governor, and hanging lifeless on the fatal tree? Yet no sooner did they behold His ascension into heaven, after having risen from the dead, than they gained the fullest assurance of faith. Then "they worshipped Him."* While He was in the act of ascending they commenced that adoration which has ever since been paid to Him in the Christian church. Shall not the consideration of this event establish the like conviction in our minds? If, notwithstanding He was a prophet, mighty in word and deed, we should ever be tempted to doubt His right to Divine honors, will not the remembrance of it excite us to pray with a yet firmer faith, "Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy upon us?"

Again, with devout gratitude, we acknowledge that the Comforter which was promised to the apostles, to fill the place of their ascended Lord, is given to be our Comforter also. In the order of God's dispensations, the full effusion of the Holy Ghost was reserved for the time of Christ. The power of the Spirit was given to Him immediately upon His ascension, as the purchase of His sufferings and the reward of His conquests. "When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."† The gift of the Spirit

* Luke 24: 52.

† Ephesians 4: 8.

OUR SAVIOUR.

was purchased by His death ; but it was not bestowed until His exaltation. By His death He broke the seal from the long closed fountain, that the waters of Divine Grace might be poured out without measure ; and, when He ascended, the refreshing streams began to find their way to this barren and thirsty earth. The pentecostal day witnessed the first precious effusion ; and since then the Holy Spirit has ever been present in the Church, and in the hearts of all the faithful, and here shall remain, in fulfilment of the promise of Christ, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."*

But again, when by faith we look up to the Saviour, now in heaven, we are comforted in the assurance that He does not forget those for whose sake He tabernacled with sinful flesh. He is our great High Priest, interceding for us, and causing our prayers and praises to be laid upon the censer of His holiness, that they may rise up before the throne of God, "an offering of a sweet-smelling savor." What a consolation to the soul impressed with a disheartening sense of its weakness and impurity ; of its unworthiness to appear before the throne of the Divine Majesty ! What an encouragement to be permitted to offer its prayers and praises in the name and mediation of the beloved Son of God ! And this, our High Priest and Advocate, is not one "which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities ; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."† And therefore, "in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted."‡ Oh, then, in our weakness and sinfulness, let us draw near to Him, and say, "Thou that takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayer."

And finally, in the ascension of our Lord into heaven, we have a sure pledge that his true and faithful disciples will follow him there.

* Matthew 28 : 20.

† Hebrews 4 : 15.

‡ Hebrews 2 : 18.

OUR SAVIOUR.

"If the head has passed into the skies, the members shall not tarry."
"I go," He said, "to prepare a place for you: and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also."* Blessed Saviour, and shall we indeed dwell with Thee! and art Thou now preparing for our reception some of the many mansions in Thy Father's house! and wilt Thou make us partakers with Thee of eternal joy, when like Thee, we shall have finished a wearisome pilgrimage upon earth! Yes, friendly reader, partaker as we trust of the promises, all this is assured to us. These glorious hopes the Lord bequeathed; and as He ascended He confirmed them to us and to our children for ever, asking from us only the reasonable conditions of faith, and love, and obedience. Be it then your constant prayer, and the governing principle of your life, to become possessed of that renewed and sanctified nature which can alone obtain a joyful immortality. Would you ascend whither your Saviour Christ has gone before you, would you enter into the glorious mansions now preparing for the faithful and enjoy the pleasures that are at God's right hand for evermore—purify your heart and lift up your affections. "Lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset you." Pray for the indwelling influences of the Spirit, and thus let your ascension be begun while yet you are on the earth. Let your soul be winged with faith, and hope, and love; and then shaking off the encumbrances of the flesh, you shall one day rise to the realms of unclouded light, and never ending joy.

* John 14: 3.



J. W. Wood.

E. Haden.

Christ

THE BIBLE

JOHN THE BAPTIST.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM ADAMS, D. D.

THREE of the evangelists begin their several histories with the account of an extraordinary person, whose career excited a profound sensation throughout Judea, and whose office it was to herald the approach of the Messiah. Luke commences his gospel with a record of certain remarkable incidents preceding the birth of this individual; all designed to attest the greatness and glory of that Being of whose public ministry he was to be the precursor. Mark, whose history is condensed into remarkable brevity, immediately introduces to our notice the same person in his first words: "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God; as it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee." The first chapter of the Gospel by John, is almost entirely occupied with the office and testimony of the Baptist. Matthew pursues a method somewhat different. He first relates the birth of our Lord, introducing his account of John the Baptist in the third chapter as a preface to the public ministry of Christ. With this public ministry Mark and John commence. Matthew and Luke, after describing the birth of Christ, allow an interval of thirty years to pass un-

JOHN THE BAPTIST.

chronicled, with the exception of one incident—his appearance, at the age of twelve years, among the doctors of the Temple. Both Christ and his harbinger remained in rural retirement, employed in humble pursuits for nearly the third part of a century; known only to a few personal friends, and objects of wonder principally to their parents, who understood not yet what marvellous things God was by them to accomplish.

Herod was king of Judea at the time of which we now speak; and the Jewish religion, in form, was still established.

The parents of John were both of sacred ancestry: his father Zacharias, a priest; and his mother Elizabeth, of the daughters of Aaron. Like Abraham and Sarah, they were childless till both were stricken in years. When officiating at the altar of incense, in the order of his course, there appeared unto Zacharias the angel Gabriel, who made to the astonished priest this wonderful annunciation: "Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." For his unbelief on this occasion, and for a demonstration of the truth of what had been promised, the incredulous father was smitten with dumbness, and spake not again, till at the birth of his son his lips were opened, and his tongue loosed, to utter the praises of God.

These things were not done in a corner. They became notorious

JOHN THE BAPTIST.

throughout all the hill country of Judea. By all were they regarded as presages of great events. They that heard them, laid them up in their hearts; saying, What manner of child shall this be? And the hand of the Lord was with him. And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying:

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath visited and redeemed his people; and hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets which have been since the world began—to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; the oath which he swore to our father Abraham. And thou, *child*, (addressing his own offspring,) shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of God; whereby the DAY-SPRING from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.” Beautiful and august mission! The morning-star, the har-binger of day!

Elizabeth, the mother of him who was born at Hebron, and Mary, the mother of him who was born at Bethlehem, were cousins; and so ties of consanguinity connected these two extraordinary children: but closer yet was the connection between the two, as wrought in the eternal purposes of God.

There was a difference of but six months in the age of John the Baptist and the Virgin's son. Both, after the signal wonders connected with their birth, pass out of sight; the one into the wilderness, the other into the shop of a carpenter at Nazareth.

Years elapse. A generation has passed away. Many of the signs and miracles which distinguished the birth of our Lord have escaped

JOHN THE BAPTIST.

the memories of men; when suddenly there appeared in the land a preacher of very uncommon power and pretension, remarkable for his dress, habits, and appearance, and not least for the unexampled effects of his ministry. Three hundred years have elapsed since a prophet had been sent from God. The state of things described by Malachi, the last of the ancient prophets, grew worse and worse. The priesthood had degenerated. The temple stood, but it was defiled. Service was performed by the sons of Levi, as of old time, but it was formal and insincere. Corruption, venality, oppression and robbery abounded, and amid the forms of religion God was dishonored by his own ministers. Such was the state of affairs when John the Baptist made his appearance in the less populous districts of Judea. He bursts as a reformer upon the dead formalism of the Jewish establishment. "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his path straight." His dress was designed to attract attention by reviving the costume of the ancient prophets. Such as wore soft raiment were in kings' houses; but he was no effeminate person in holiday attire. A rough and stern service had he to perform; and to show that he had nothing to fear or hope from the frown or favor of man, his refuge was the wilderness, his food such as nature gave him, locusts as they fell in his path, and honey oozing from the crevices of the rock. His intention was, in dress and habits of life, to present the most striking contrast to a self-indulgent and effeminate priesthood.

In closing the canon of ancient Scripture, centuries before, Malachi uttered these memorable words: "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts." The evangelists expressly affirm, that he who now preaches

JOHN THE BAPTIST.

with such startling effect, is the man of whom Malachi spoke. He is the messenger sent forth to announce the speedy coming of anointed Royalty. Great events are about to take place; it was fit that men should be informed of it. What ancient prophecy labored to express is now near its fulfilment. The Desire of nations was about to come. The sun was about to rise on a dark world. Preparation was needed for the reception of the world's Creator and Redeemer. It was meet that a nation should be admonished to REPENT, to PREPARE. This was the substance of John's preaching. His ministry was singularly bold, fearless, and energetic. No one mistook his meaning. The last verse of the old Testament contained the assurance, "I will send you Elijah the prophet." In the "spirit and power of Elias" did John come. That stern-souled seer, who denounced woe in the fear-struck palaces of kings, now fed by ravens and now bringing down fire from the skies, was the prototype of the Baptist.

For publican, for soldier, for Pharisee, he had a fit and chosen word. The blow which he swung around and around never missed its aim. "Oh generation of vipers," said he to the Sadducees and Pharisees, "who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance. Cease from your dissimulation. Trust not in your external relations to the Jewish Church. Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham for our father. A new dispensation has begun. Forms, appearances are nothing. The axe is laid at the root of the tree, and ere long it will cut all fruitless, sapless trunks to the ground. The words of the old prophet are about to be fulfilled: Behold, he cometh; but who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap; and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and purify the sons of Levi. Of his appearance I am the precursor. I call you to repentance, for he that cometh

JOHN THE BAPTIST.

after me hath a fan in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Well were his words suited to his work as a reformer. The country was stirred. Jerusalem, and all the region round about Jordan went out to see and hear him. Such were the power and sublimity of his ministry, that many mistook him for the Messiah himself. Repeatedly did he disavow such pretensions. "The priests and Levites sent from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed and denied not, but confessed, I am not the Christ." So late as when John wrote his gospel, there was a sect at Ephesus (which continued for a considerable time afterwards) whose distinctive claim was that John the Baptist was the Christ: and this explains why that evangelist takes such special pains to correct these false impressions. "He was not that Light; but was sent to bear witness of that Light."

"The law and the prophets were until John." Equally separated from the choir of the prophets and the company of the apostles, his was a peculiar dispensation, which was neither entirely legal or evangelical, but occupied an intermediate station, possessing something of the character and attributes of both, a kind of twilight equally removed from the obscurity of the first and the splendor of the last and perfect economy of religion.

That Jesus of Nazareth should have been preceded by such a herald, born after angelic announcement, amid signs and wonders, is the first of those remarkable phenomena which enter into our estimate of his own mysterious life. The positive testimony given by the Baptist concerning Christ, therefore, is too important to be overlooked. He, it must be remembered, was a "prophet and more than a prophet." He was no vagrant fanatic, but filled with the Holy Ghost from his birth. He was received by the Jews as a prophet from God.

JOHN THE BAPTIST.

His baptism was held to be from heaven by all the people. The Pharisees themselves conceded his sanctity and Divine mission. The testimony of such a man to the character of Christ is high and incontestable. Profoundly did he abase himself before his younger kinsman. Before his birth, Elizabeth his mother, "speaking by the Holy Ghost," humbled herself and her offspring before the Virgin and her son, saying, with the utmost deference, "Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" Tempted as he might have been by his extreme popularity to attract and divert attention to himself, he ever kept in view the humility of his own mission in contrast with the glory of Him whose approach he announced. Great as he was in the esteem of men, he professed himself not worthy to unloose the shoe-latchet of Him who was to come. "He that cometh after me is preferred before me; *for he was before me*;" an expression which cannot be understood in any other light than as referring to an existence of Christ before he was born in the flesh. He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove upon the head of Christ at his baptism. He heard the voice of God, as it had been thunder, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The day after his baptism, John seeth Jesus coming towards him, and said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God."

Christ begins his public ministry and doeth many wonderful works. The disciples of John come and say, "Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come unto him. John answered, "Ye yourselves bear me witness that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I was

JOHN THE BAPTIST.

sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly, because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy is fulfilled. He that cometh from above is ABOVE ALL: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Testimony like this pertains to no mere mortal. The announcements of approaching Divinity are these. The King draweth nigh in his glory. When Isaiah, in prophetic vision, saw the career of John, and described it in language which inspiration has applied to the person of the Forerunner, it is in these words: "Prepare ye the way of Jehovah, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain made low. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

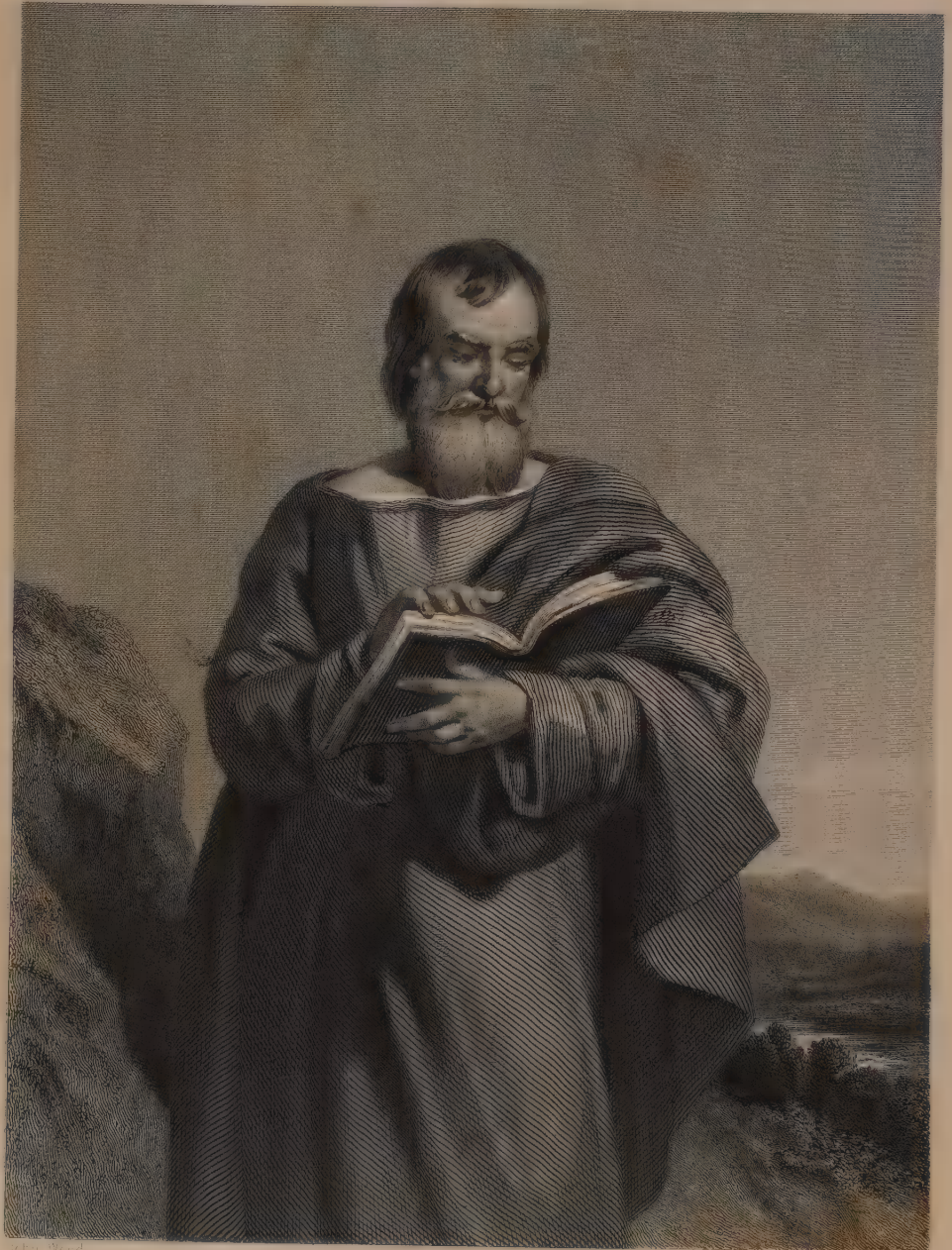
The mission of John was speedily accomplished. A dispensation purely preparatory could not be permanent, or of long duration. A twelvemonth closed his public ministry. Fearless and faithful to all alike, he had exposed himself to the wrath of Herod, or, more correctly, the imperious and cruel woman with whom he was associated. Herod had put away his own wife, the daughter of an Arabian king, and had taken the wife of his brother Philip, that brother being yet alive. Both were living in atrocious crime. For this John had rebuked them; and on this account the king had bound him, and cast him into prison. Here John lies; and the fame of Jesus is spreading. The lustre of the morning-star is fading before the rising light of the sun! Immured in prison, the Baptist sends his disciples to ask the wonder-working stranger whether he was the Christ. It would seem, that his own mind was obscured and confused; and that

JOHN THE BAPTIST.

he was giving the fulfilment of his own words: "I must decrease." His work is done. The wrath of a revengeful woman has its way, and the sword decapitates the Baptist in his cell. His disciples take the headless body, and bury it; and *came and told Jesus*. "Verily," said he, "among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist; notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of God, is greater than he. If ye will receive it, this is Elias which was for to come. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Elijah was great. John the Baptist was great. Greater and better is it, by far, to live under a dispensation of grace and truth as brought by Jesus Christ, than in any season, or service of any preparatory economy.

Higher and higher has the Sun of Righteousness risen in the sky. With us is no twilight, but meridian day. In one sense, the baptism of repentance and of preparation has been superseded; in another, it still remaineth. With grace and eternal life, Christ cometh to the soul of every man; proffering his aid, and promising to manifest himself in power and glory within his proper temple, "whose temple are we." Is no preparation suitable for such a visitation? Surely, the preaching of John is not obsolete. *Prepare*,—scourge out from the heart all intrusive and unbecoming inmates; make ready for the King of kings and he will stoop to enter, and rejoice to dwell with lowly contrition.

Again hath the Son of God promised to visit the world. Prophecy glows with the description of those "scenes surpassing fable," when the "tabernacle of God shall be with men." These are the days of preparation! Let us then make ready a way for the Lord; remove every obstruction; smooth every roughness; fill up every chasm; and the "glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together."



John Wood

E. P. Mason

St. Matthew

ST. MATTHEW.

BY THE REV. HENRY W. BELLOWS.

THE Gospel of Matthew occupies about an eighth part of the New Testament—the New Testament itself being a small volume of less contents than the ordinary duodecimo of modern booksellers. In this small space of forty middle sized pages—hardly sufficient in the authorship of our day to hold the bare genealogy of a distinguished poet or soldier—is contained a complete history of the most eventful and important life ever passed on earth.

Were we without any knowledge of Jesus Christ, except that to be derived from the Gospel of Matthew, we should have no cause to complain of the inadequacy of our information. Precious as the independent testimony and original contributions of the other evangelists are, now that we possess them, we probably should not have felt any destitution had we been exclusively confined to Matthew's full and careful biography. So thoroughly acquainted with his subject, so strong and clear in his possession of facts, so direct and transparent in the statement of them, so patient and careful in his report of his Master's words, so methodical without artifice in his manner, so full without repetition or minuteness in his matter is the First Evangelist, that

S T. M A T T H E W .

we feel that we have in his gospel a life of Christ adequate to the subject and to the wants of the church—a history which places the other gospels rather among spiritual luxuries than necessities of evangelical existence. Matthew's gospel, were we allowed to make such a distinction, might be said to be the plain bread of life. We cannot doubt that the great mass of common Christians have derived their clearest ideas of the Saviour's life and teachings—so far as they have come from the word of God at all—from the gospel of Matthew.

It is interesting to reflect, that for about thirty years after our Lord's ascension, the gospel existed in the world only in the memories of men—in the knowledge and oral testimony of eye and ear witnesses. The immediate disciples of Christ were not specially commissioned by him to commit the history of his words and works to writing; and had they failed to do so, the world would not have been utterly bereft of the light and power of the gospel. What had so mightily wrought in one generation would have greatly moved the next, and with diminished efficacy, but still with unspeakable power, would have continued to mould successive generations. Indeed the indispensableness and superior energy of the written word was reserved for the discovery of later ages. Tradition may be unduly depreciated, and the abuse of its authority in the Catholic church has evidently led to its excessive disparagement in the Protestant. There is no necessary controversy between the church and the Scriptures. It is important to recognize the church—comprehending all the institutions which give visibility to Christ's authority and doctrines—as a principal channel through which the knowledge and power of the gospel have descended to us; and even to admit, that without the written word we should not be utterly destitute of the grace of God, so long as faithful men continued to receive it from those who had caught its history and its unction from their predecessors in Christian faith and character.

The written word would be at least as dead in all practical influences, without the interpreting and applying spirit of a teaching church, as the church would be lost in error and exposed to decay, without the guidance, support, and authority of the sacred record. We must not forget in our Protestant enthusiasm for the Scriptures, that the real seat of the gospel in the world is in the souls of converted and sanctified men. Should the New Testament perish, and be as irrecoverable as the wealth of the Alexandrian Library, the gospel would not be wholly lost while one faithful believer remained to transmit the sacred torch, first lighted by the Son of God, to other holy hands.

And yet it is plain, that the written word has performed a most wonderful part in the preservation and spread of the gospel in its purity. Had the religion of Christ been intrusted wholly to oral tradition, while we are not disposed to doubt that it would have survived, we have every reason for believing that it would have suffered a corruption most disastrous to its moral efficacy and saving influences. The Catholic church—to which we owe so much for its long ministry to an illiterate world, and which we cannot doubt fulfilled a mission appointed to it by God—illustrated at a very early period, the perils to which a religion exclusively in the hands of a priesthood, is inevitably exposed. The love of power, and especially of that most seductive kind, spiritual power, is too stubborn and treacherous a passion in our nature to make it at all safe to remove the check which a documentary faith exerts, from the administrators of religion. Priests, unbound by a written law to which their disciples may freely refer, are as dangerous as monarchs uncontrolled by a constitution familiar to their subjects. There could have been no Reformation without the New Testament, although there might have been a Christian church; but how much worse that church would have been than Luther found it,

had not its priesthood been possessed of the word of God, as well as the traditions of the fathers, if it be not easy to estimate, it would be difficult to overstate.

These considerations are not out of place in contemplating the character and services of that sainted apostle, who first put his hand to the Life of the Saviour. What a pregnant hour for the church and the world was that, when the once despised tax-gatherer, little accustomed to any other use of his pen than that of casting the accounts or making the returns of his unpopular office, first felt himself moved to write the history of his Master's life! We may imagine him to have often turned the matter over in his mind. For thirty years he had told the story over from beginning to end, to all who would listen to his words. Often had he witnessed with gratitude, and an increasing desire to multiply its subjects, the mighty power of its divine truth to remove the doubts and melt the prejudices, to convict the consciences and renew the hearts of his hearers. Not seldom, in the yearnings of his soul towards widely separated communities, had he wished himself multiplied or divided, that he might become the speedy messenger of glad tidings to all at once. Instead of this, the infirmities of age were creeping upon him and crippling his activity. His knees no longer had the alacrity with which they originally straightened themselves to obey that never to be forgotten call, "Follow me!" His breath, doubtless, sometimes failed the toil-worn and aged man, as he recited with undecaying interest the long tale of his Master's life. Already, too, he had perhaps listened with jealous regret to some young disciple who never saw the Lord, repeating with ambitious embellishments or careless omissions the story impressed in severe accuracy and unchanging reality upon his retentive heart. Then, again, persecution was reducing the number of the original and authorized witnesses of the gospel story. As one apostle

ST. MATTHEW.

heard of the imprisonment and death of another, how must his sense of the urgency of his own labors have increased, in the warning thus given him that his time was short; and in the reflection that the sacred band of the immediate disciples was broken and melting away, leaving their great work undone! Already the Epistles of Paul and Peter, of James and John, must have been circulating in the churches, and may have fallen under Matthew's eye—and what further could have been wanting to suggest to his anxious mind a method of extending his influence, perpetuating his labors, and counteracting the obstacles to his apostleship which age and infirmity were presenting to his experience and forethought?

And yet we may suppose Matthew to have hesitated long before commencing his gospel, even after having fairly entertained the design. He did not feel himself to be a leader among the twelve. The earnest and commanding Peter, on whose moral impetus Jesus himself seemed so much to rely for the success of his cause—James, the wise in counsel, the apt in speech, judicial in the weight of his character—John the beloved, the intimate personal friend of his Master—Bartholomew, supposed to be Nathaniel, and if so, one whom the Lord had distinguished as an Israelite without guile—none of these had yet thought it necessary to write their revered Master's life; and "Matthew the publican," to whose modest nature there seems always to have cleaved a touching sense of his own obscurity or relative inferiority, may well have doubted whether he could becomingly undertake the unfamiliar task. But, perhaps, his very humility helped him to the resolution which greater ambition would have hindered. Great as the sense of duty and usefulness must have been which impelled his enterprise, yet could he have understood the importance of the work he was undertaking, the gigantic conception would have crushed his courage. Compulsory as he felt it to be with him to ex-

tend his influence and to use every means, and this in particular, to overcome the obstacles to his ministry created by old age, now blossoming upon his head, yet, doubtless, he thought humbly at the best of his labors and his powers, and wrote his gospel to serve only a pressing want in his own immediate experience, and to meet a necessity confined to the comparatively small sphere of his own apostleship.

He little dreamed that he was composing a work destined to an immortality like that of those sacred Scriptures he had profoundly revered from his youth. He would have started back with horror from the presumption of adding any thing to the holy books of the law and the prophets. Had he been told that his modest history, multiplied by millions on millions, should be bound up with the books of Moses, the Psalms of David, the Proverbs of Solomon and the strains of Isaiah, to be held still more sacred than those venerable writings; could he have conceived the thought that for untold ages, the learned and the simple, kings and slaves, the aged and the young, in all climes and in all languages should hang over his pages with awe-struck reverence and meek docility—to see the Lord as he had drawn his image;—could he have imagined that the very existence of Christianity, the memory and the influence of his Saviour depended to a vast extent upon his labors;—he would have dropped the pen, with characteristic humility, and abandon an undertaking for which he held himself so little competent. But whatever he himself may have thought, it is manifest to us, that Matthew was peculiarly fitted both by original endowments and the discipline of his odious vocation, for the very work to which God's Spirit called him. The qualities which procured him the office of a tax-gatherer, improved by the exercise of that calling, admirably adapted him to become the historian of the gospel. He must have been by nature, sagacious, prudent, honest, mild and industrious, a man of practical and executive abilities, of

S T. M A T T H E W.

sound judgment and cautious carriage. He was used to an official station, and that implies accuracy, method, and subordination. His duties at Capernaum, at the receipt of customs on the lake, required him to be a close and vigilant observer. There he must have acquired the habit of noticing significant but slight circumstances connected with attempts to evade the revenue laws, and of accurately reporting facts to his superiors. He must have been used to the pen, and to the preparation of documents. It was doubtless with reference to qualities, that Jesus had often witnessed in him there—his tact in avoiding offence, his meekness under abuse and contempt, his fidelity to unpopular duties, his incorruptibleness and his good sense—perhaps with a more distant eye to his becoming the immortal recorder of his own life—that our Lord called him among his earliest disciples. Both the spirit and the method of Matthew's gospel, are redolent of the qualities and accomplishments that belonged to his office. As a publican he had learned to bear the ignominy, which was more grievously to assail him as the disciple of the crucified Nazarene. His despised station had schooled to meekness that temper which displayed its perfect equableness in the candor and calmness of his gospel. He had acquired at the receipt of customs that accuracy in the statement of facts, that perfunctory collectedness and freedom from exaggeration in the relation of circumstances in themselves deeply exciting, which are so marked in his pages. As a subordinate in a national office, he had learned to sink the man in the officer, and to become a pure and unrefracting medium of truth. His life of Jesus is essentially a business document. It is direct, blunt, explicit, sober, compendious. It has no artifice about it, if we except the method of a clear and statistical mind. It states the most wonderful and the most ordinary facts with the same impersonal and official simplicity of manner and neutrality of tone, while it has a beginning, middle

and end, and possesses the formality and completeness of a well-considered and carefully intentioned document, it is wholly free from rhetorical art, and literary ambition, or from any appearances of design to make out a case, to support a character, or to argue a cause. It is strictly narrative, and has a verisimilitude which defies the suspicion of imposture, a confidence of knowledge which commands respect, and an air of reality which carries conviction.

It is conceded by the best judges, that Matthew's order of events must govern the chronology of the gospels—and this we should expect from his habits of mind and his previous commercial education. It might not, perhaps, have been anticipated that he would have reported the conversations and discourses of our Lord with so much apparent accuracy and fulness, even to the extent of condensing statements of fact, to make room for the Master's parables and reasonings. But it must be remembered that to a reporter, spoken words are facts, and, judging by the parallelisms of Mark and Luke, we are compelled to believe that in Matthew we have as nearly as possible the very words of Christ, which his attentive ear and accurate mind caught from Jesus' own lips, reported by a memory rendered sharp and strong, as well by intensity of faith and affection and the habit of oral repetition, as by the aid of the Holy Spirit. Matthew's whole character, as it stands out in the gospels—communicated though it be by a very few positive strokes in high relief on an extensive background of negative evidence—bears testimony to his having drunk very deeply into the spirit of his Saviour; and if it were so, we can readily account for his involuntary interest in the communication of his parable, his judicious fulness in reporting the discourses of Jesus, with his wise brevity, though infrequent forgetfulness or omission, in the statement of facts. He recorded the gospel as he preached it; as it lay in his own mind, giving such relative prominence to facts and pre-

cepts, circumstances and doctrines, as they actually bore to each other in the real life of the Saviour.

If we owed nothing to Matthew but the full record of the Sermon on the Mount, how far would he rise by that sole title above all authors, sacred and profane, in the extent of his claims on the gratitude of the world!

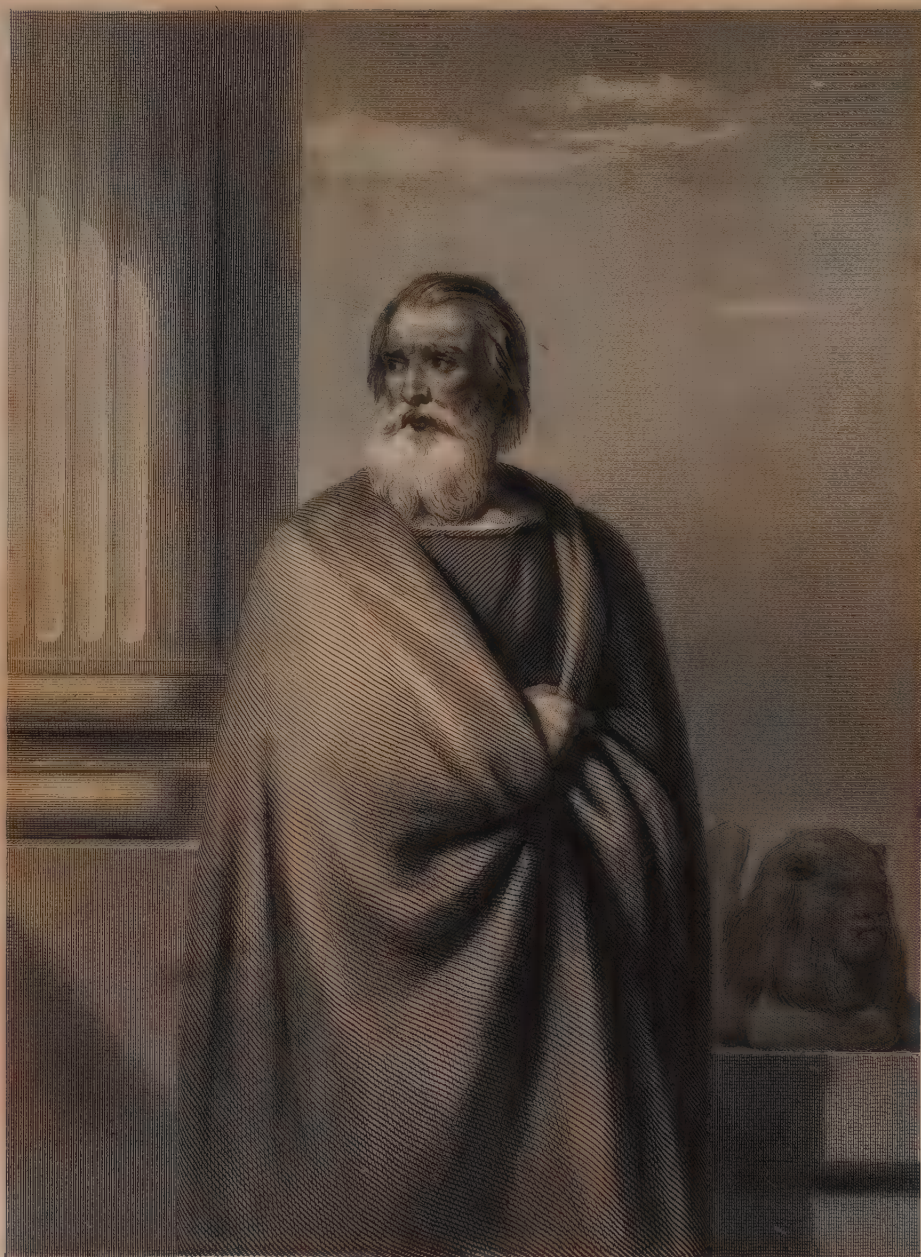
It remains only to state, as briefly as possible, the few facts known in regard to the apostle.

He is first mentioned in his own gospel—chap. 9, verse 9th—and in a way which has drawn the attention and admiration of all commentators for the modesty and simplicity of the record which he makes of the most important event in his life, and one of the most important in its consequences to the church and the world. “And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom; and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.” Mark also (chap. 2 : 14) states the fact of his call, and adds what the delicacy of Matthew had forbidden him from telling, that he afterwards entertained Jesus, together with a large company of his old friends, at his own house. We infer that he was a man of thrift and substance (things since often united in the Jew with an ignominious position), a fact which while it gave importance to his early adhesion to Christ, renders his allegiance doubly honorable to him on account of the pecuniary sacrifices it must have involved. Luke confirms this inference, for he says in his account of his call, that “*he left all and followed*” Jesus. Matthew claims nothing on this score. In the list of the apostles, Mark and Luke put him in the seventh place; but Matthew puts himself a little lower down—in the eighth—the only wonder being that his humility allowed him to occupy any place but the foot. When we have added that Matthew was the son of Alpheus, and that he sometimes bore

ST. MATTHEW.

the name of Levi, we have told all that is known about him — for the tradition, not to be traced back of the fifth century, that he labored as an apostle in Ethiopia and died a martyr in Nadabbar in that country, is of course entitled to no credit. Except in the list of the apostles, he is not mentioned in the Acts. His great and durable distinction, was to be the author of the first gospel; and he might well resign to the other and more conspicuous apostles, the immortality gained by Luke's brilliant history of their labors. Doubtless his own were as worthy of being commemorated, could he have consented to be his own biographer, and would have found a record with the rest had he not sought obscure fields of arduous toil. But he gave his reputation up to extend his Lord's glory, and, like other humble disciples, secured an exaltation as unexpected in manner as degree.

The gospel of St. Matthew was written about the year 64 or 65 A. D. It was originally written in Hebrew, and translated into Greek, probably, by another and unknown hand. The apostle's purpose in it, is supposed to have been the instruction of the Jewish converts. God's purpose in it, was as wide as the spread of his Gospel; as lasting as the duration of his church on earth; and as sublime as the salvation of souls for eternity.



W. H. H. H.

W. H. H. H.

S T. M A R K.

BY THE REV. SAMUEL ROOSEVELT JOHNSON, D. D.

IN the earliest days of Christianity, a very few years after the ascension of our Blessed Redeemer, a young disciple was living in Jerusalem, highly esteemed by the apostles and by all the Church, as one exemplary in his behavior, adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. He had been piously brought up in the religion of his forefathers; then he and his nearest relatives received the testimony of the gospel, and became decided and active Christians. His mother Mary, of the tribe of Levi, had independent means of living, and was helpful to the saints; to her hospitable home, the Apostle Peter, delivered from prison by the angel, came, sure both of a welcome and a ready communication with the brethren; there at the well-known door of her gate did he knock, and the damsel Rhoda knew at once his voice, and opened not for very gladness of heart; there he found many gathered together praying. The uncle of the young man, Mary's brother, though not of the twelve, was of high standing among the teachers of Christianity; he also was a possessor of property, and having land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet; so admirable was he in pouring consolation into the

troubled heart, that by the apostles themselves he was surnamed Barnabas, "the son of consolation."

Thus brought up under the kindest influences of religion, and surrounded by the comforts of common life, with warm friends, a peaceful and easy home, and a well-spread board, himself a believing and prayerful man, this young disciple seemed exempt from the usual trials of many homeless Christians; a fair example, as to his condition, of so many pious persons in our own times and our own civilized country. Thus trained, he probably anticipated no faltering of Christian resolution on his part, when his mother's brother received the name and dignity of apostle, and was associated with Saint Paul in a work of extended missionary enterprise among prosperous cities of Syria, and Asia Minor, and islands adjoining; nor, probably, did his friends conceive that he was unequal to the work. So Barnabas and Saul returning from Jerusalem took him with them, even John whose surname was Mark; and when they departed from Antioch, separated for the work whereunto the Holy Ghost had called them, he still continued to be their minister, assisting in their toils, relieving them of certain cares, and performing duties to which his inferior office yet was equal.

But as the apostles went on, difficulties were increased, and he found himself no longer among quiet scenes of home, its calm and studious thoughts and occupations, nor among numerous friends, as at Jerusalem and Antioch. Now he met not the brethren daily at the hours of prayer in the temple, or in the upper rooms which were the Christian chapels, nor at the home of hospitable Mary, or other affectionate and true-hearted disciples whose fidelity might be trusted. Amidst such protections and assistances, even the timid and the weak feel strong. But now they proceeded upon unknown ground, where Jews were hostile and Gentiles fierce; renouncing their comforts, hazarding

their lives, and even where they were so happy as to secure converts and friends, soon leaving the comfortable harbor and venturing out again upon the tempestuous ocean. Very soon, for causes not recorded, but which one may readily conjecture, who feels the frailty of his own heart, and has observed the effect of untried scenes upon a mind naturally irresolute, and untrained as yet in self-denying practices,—very soon his purpose of abiding with the apostles and ministering to them in their hard and dangerous undertaking, gave way; and Mark, though in Christian honor engaged and pledged to accompany them, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem, failing in the very crisis of his duty.

A good man, of excellent principle, spirit, habits and wishes, when he finds himself led away from his purposed plans of duty, feels dissatisfied and unhappy. Not having anticipated such an event, he is distressed in conscience, and his self-esteem and confidence are deeply mortified and humbled. He is led to abasement before God, and to great modesty and humility before man. He becomes more watchful over his spirit, more disciplined in his habits, and generally far more firm in any future trials, especially those of the same nature he had failed in; God overruling his weakness and his fall to spiritual recovery, strength, and enlarged usefulness. But with a man not truly pious, or with many imperfections and infirmities, it is often otherwise. Such a one frequently persists in justifying his course, excusing it even to his own conscience by many a miserable apology: and his mortified vanity seeks relief by nursing up that good opinion of himself which his wrong conduct was calculated to injure; he opposes the cause or the persons he has forsaken; and neither humbles himself before God, nor seeks the health of his restoring grace, nor disciplines his weak heart to a more firm and self-sacrificing habit. Not at all so was it with Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas. He maintained his in-

S T . M A R K .

tegrity of spirit and his genuine Christian character ; he persevered in the right way, faithfully laboring in the gospel.

Five years after, when Paul and Barnabas proposed to go again and visit every city where they had preached the word of the Lord, Barnabas determined to take with them his nephew Mark, led by his own esteem for his character, and affection for his person, from his indulgent temper being disposed to overlook his former fault, or from his affectionate regard for one so nearly related to himself ; and from his thorough acquaintance with his state of mind, his real worth and his improved character, deeming that he was now at least suitable for the office. Or it may be, that Mark himself may have sought the appointment, in the hope of undoing by his faithful assiduity, the injury he had done ; and of gaining a spiritual victory on the very field of his former defeat. But Paul, who had not those persuasive motives and feelings of relationship, and who was naturally of very firm texture of mind, neither indulgent to himself nor to others, would not consent. He thought not good to take him with them who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder, one from the other. So Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus his native city, and Paul took Silas, and also went his way.

Doubtless, this was a severe trial to Mark, and, humanly speaking, very mortifying. But who shall say it was not better for him to be thus tried ; and does it not convey a great and useful lesson ? By the true and humble Christian, such event would be accepted as a just punishment from God for the fault long since committed, and so borne in penitence and with submission ; and would not be allowed to create any feelings of animosity or even of alienation towards the one who had rejected him, and whose judgment must have been approved as neither unwise, nor pronounced without considerable reason,

S T. M A R K.

The Apostle Paul knew what they were to encounter: the scourging and the dungeon at Philippi were such scenes as experience had previously taught him to expect; and it was necessary he should have one on whose proved firmness he could confidently rely. We have every reason to conclude from subsequent circumstances highly honorable to Mark, that he received the repulse as the right-minded Christian should, and spiritually profited by it. It may teach all, that great confidence is of slow growth, and when violated deliberately in any important instance, it necessarily receives a severe wound, from which it is not easy to recover; that our faults reach far out into our after lives, and are not confined to the simple occasions which gave birth to them, but like the smooth surface of the water troubled by the casting of a stone, the circles move outward and far; and thus also, it may lead to a greater present fear and vigilance, and a more penitential submission under all forfeitures of our protections and our privileges.

And now is the history of this young man ended, and is his name thus dropped unhonored from the sacred record or the church's annals, leaving his future life, like that of Demas, to ominous conjecture? Oh, not so! the evangelist Mark, who for once faltered, nobly redeemed his character; his name is recorded with honor and repeatedly on God's holy page, and all Christian story reports of him as well. St. Paul himself accepted and then solicited his presence and his services; and God conferred upon him the choice honor of contributing a book to the Holy Canon of our faith. His labors were great, extensive and successful; and he became an apostle, and the founder and ruler of eminent and leading Christian churches, one especially distinguished for its importance and its spiritual elevation, its admirable discipline and its eventful history.

Mark continued for some time with Barnabas, and then attached himself to Peter; by whom he seems to have been received to the

S T. M A R K.

very same office as that which he had wished to secure with Paul, as his intimate friend, interpreter, and attendant minister. It is said that he had not seen nor heard the Lord Jesus, but in his youth had been brought by Peter to the knowledge and the faith of Christ; and as his convert and his child in baptism, is named by him in his first epistle "Marcus, my son"—an expression at least of high confidence and love. And it does seem beautifully accordant with Christian sympathy, that the apostle so related and endeared, who had himself once greatly fallen, should thus take by the hand the humbled Mark; and as the blessed Saviour had restored him to his affectionate confidence, and set him in office and at work of highest order, that he should do the same by his child in the Gospel, whom he saw to be in spirit and in deed a very Christian—now willing and now able to be offered up, if need be, upon the altar of his faith.

Many and venerable fathers record it as the Church's memory, that Mark attended very closely upon the person and ministry of Peter; that he reiterated to the people his narrations concerning the life and teaching of the blessed Jesus; that urged by the converts to commit them to writing, he did so when at Rome; that thus derived from the dictation or suggestions of the apostle, and by him approved, the Gospel according to St. Mark, prepared before the apostle's decease, and extensively and with authority published after it in Italy and Egypt, passed unto the churches as with the seal of Peter, and was by him authorized to be read in the churches—and by his name the ancients sometimes call it. And scholars then and since note internal signs as verifying the tradition—specifications proving the narrator to have been upon the spot, though Mark himself was not; omissions of the incidents which tell most to Peter's praise, distinct mention of those which tell to his disparagement—proofs of the apostle's humility and modesty.

S T. M A R K.

It is gratifying to perceive, from incidental expressions falling from his pen, that Paul subsequently manifested his entire confidence in the Christian manliness and fidelity of Mark: "Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, touching whom ye received commandment, if he come unto you, receive him." Him he names and a few others, as "my fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me." And as his great life was drawing near to its close, and appalling perils were gathering fast around him, forsaken by others who were alarmed by the same terrors, or wearied with the same wearing service which had disheartened Mark in the outset of his life, then he writes thus to Timothy: "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me, for Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world. Only Luke is with me. Take Mark and bring him with thee, for he is profitable to me for the ministry."

Thus we find Mark, uninfluenced by that pride of the natural man which forgets not an ancient slight, however good reason there might have been for it, again by the side of Paul and among his fellow laborers. Did he say, 'Nay—he would not accept my services once, now let him call others to the rescue?' Oh, not so! the true-hearted and now strong-hearted Mark hastened onward—labored with the apostle, sharing his sorrows, his dangers, and his toils; and in all probability had the singular privilege (sacred as Elisha's) of being with the two champion apostles, so loved and so revered, in the very crisis of their history; witness of their triumph over the last enemy, the glory of their martyrdom, their passage to the skies.

It has been asserted that from Rome Mark went to Aquileia, and formed a great church in that thriving city; whose citizens in later ages became the founders of Venice, which famous republic claimed St. Mark as patron saint—its standard was the lion of St. Mark—

and its proudest Place and its stateliest temple are honored by his memory.

However this may have been, the accounts are uniform that the evangelist went into Egypt and the countries adjacent—scenes probably already familiar to his knowledge—landing at Cyrene, where some assert that he was born. Here, in the beautiful and cultivated region of Cyrenaica and in its five prosperous cities, and among the more rugged hills of Marmorica and in the Thebais of Egypt, he labored with great success for the testimony of Jesus, making many converts and establishing many churches; thence he passed into the great metropolis of Alexandria, second only to Rome itself, where, to use the language of Jerome, he was the first to preach Christ, the first bishop of the place, and where he established a church whose congregations were so eminent for purity of doctrine and strictness of living, that it stood foremost as an exemplar to the followers of Christ. In all that region he has ever been honored as their father and founder. The church ritual of old bore the name “the Liturgy of St. Mark,” and has not lost it yet; and the style of the patriarchate is, “the See of the Holy Evangelist Mark.”

Here, on this field of his conflicts and his victories, Mark died; but whether in course of nature or by martyrdom, is a matter of much controversy. Eusebius calls him not a martyr; Jerome says he died at Alexandria; while, early as A. D. 400, Palladius writes of one coming from afar to Alexandria, to pray at the martyr tomb of Mark the venerable athlete of Christ; and the tradition of the Greek church consents with that of Egypt to name him martyr; and the Alexandrian, Oriental, and Arabian chronicles describe the martyr scene. They tell that the heathen, celebrating the feast of Serapis, seized Mark while offering to God the prayer of the Oblation; that they savagely dragged him along by a rope, spotting the ground and stones with

ST. MARK.

his blood; and then at nightfall casting him into prison, he meanwhile blessing the Lord who judged him worthy to suffer for his name. Visions consoled him in the night. An angel told him that his name was written in the book of life. Jesus himself appeared and gave him his peace. The next morning the inhumanity was repeated, and the martyrdom consummated. It was the 25th of April, known throughout Christendom as "St. Mark's Day." The pagans partially consumed his body, and the believers buried his honored remains near by in the hollow of a rock. Since then, Alexandria has venerated his relics under a marble tomb; and Venice hides them in the magnificent chapel of her Doge; and Rome, and Prague, and Paris, with other places, put in some claim of interest.

Are we compelled to leave this question of his martyrdom to conflicting inferences drawn from the silence of some and the reliability of others? May we not at least decide between the two nearly balanced conclusions, by internal evidence derived from the harmony of person and event? Seems it not almost exacted by the necessity of the history, that Mark should die a martyr, and possess this *pleroma* of his grace; that he should put this highest Christian seal to his integrity, and bequeath this priceless gem of conquest robbed from his mightiest and vanquished enemy? Under the circumstances of his early irresolution, and his noble recovery, and his glorious after life, it would seem that he had earned this destiny. St. John might well spare such testimonial, and might not need the blessing for his perfection; but for Paul the persecutor, for Peter the denier, for Mark the deserter, all noble champions of Christ, in an age when God was wont thus to signalize the triumphs of his grace, it seems required for the happy proportions of their nature, and the beautiful finish of their history.

Such was the life of this man of God, the evangelist St. Mark.

Ancient fathers were pleased to find correspondences in Scripture ; and in the four living creatures seen by Ezekiel in visions of God, they emblemed the four evangelists ; and according to Jerome Mark was the lion, and according to Augustin Mark was the man—the boldest heart and the noblest mind on earth. And assuredly, he fulfilled the emblem well.

The lessons of such a life are of untold value—to be felt, pondered and applied,—and never to be forgotten.

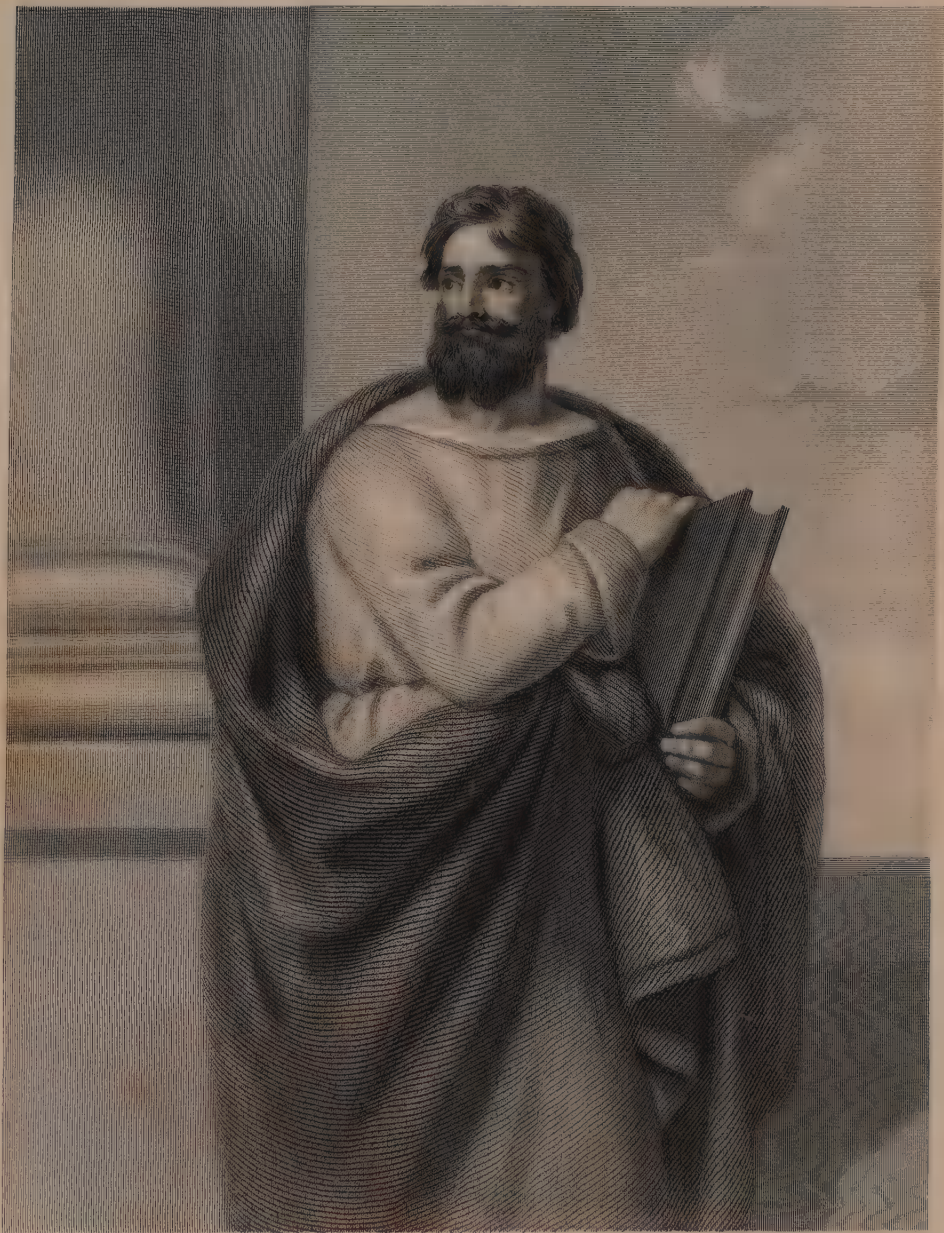
It is another proof that God is very gracious to the greatly penitent, accepts their persons and blesses their work. It is a thought to live in many a prostrate heart, that penitents were leaders of the earliest sacramental hosts and foremost in the victories of the cross ; that the two proudest cities of the world, Rome and Alexandria, were won to Christ by penitents. Is it that God vouchsafes to them unusual favors, to make evident his mercies and to encourage all our hearts ? or is it, that such breathe with greater intensity of spirit, and so accomplish more ? Either way, it is a mighty argument of love and hope and effort !

It may warn us not to look down upon one who has failed under temptation, when we see the resolution and effort to do well, earnest and long sustained, nor to withhold from such our esteem and confidence for causes long since passed. It may teach a lesson more needed yet—not to despair of our own selves, because we are wounded and defeated ; but to do battle for life and for victory, even on the very field of our misfortune and our shame, strong through our immortal hope in Christ our restorer. It may teach us how to overcome our infirmities and apply our remedies. Ours is a self-indulgent age. The ancient disciplines of faith and love are deemed a superstition and mistake. Those exercises of severity, which devout believers of former times thought useful to enable them to endure hardness as good sol-

S T. M A R K.

diers of Jesus Christ, are neglected; and so when difficult, wearing work comes, and sacrifice of comforts and peril of life for Christ's sake, men shrink back alarmed or disinclined, and fail as really under the trial, as Mark did, or as Demas. Those who have ventured to record the personal appearance of Mark, picture him as of a very mortified appearance and habit. And as he became eminently strict, the founder of a church disciplined to a severe holiness, may we not infer, that in this way, his faith mastered its former feebleness, and nerved his quiet and easy Christianity to the power of a more devoted life.

But most of all, be this memorable lesson engraven on each one's inmost soul. Be not content merely to watch thy adversary, to endure, to resist, to keep at bay, or even to drive off. Take a nobler teaching from this brave exemplar, and act it out in thy person and thy life. Turn resolute upon all of calamity which ought to be resisted, or of evil thou art pledged to master; and clad in the armor of God, charge it full on thy conflict field. Make that which was thy most perilous weakness formerly, to become thy very strength henceforward. Command thy all of disappointed hope or effort to work for the high accomplishment of life's greatest purposes. Thy veriest foe, who was most thy tyrant, who led thee captive at his will in shameful vassalage, him compel to be thy prisoner and thy slave, the abiding monument of thy triumph. Soldier and athlete of Christ, heir of a celestial heritage, child of a parentage divine, do thou also LEAD THY CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE!



John Aival

W. H. Miller

ST. LUKE.

BY THE REV. C. A. BARTOL.

LUKE, the author of the gospel called after him, and of the book of the Acts, seems not to have been one of the original disciples and apostles of Christ. There is, however, considerable uncertainty in the circumstances of his introduction to that little band, which has multiplied, through earth and heaven, into an everlasting church. Some have thought he writes not from personal knowledge, but from testimony. Others do not consider his language at the commencement of his gospel as implying, that he was not an eye-witness himself. Some argue that he was one of the seventy whom Jesus sent out, and of the hundred and twenty in the midst of whom Peter stood up. There is difference of opinion about his lineage; some believing he was a Jew, others that he was born of Gentile parents and educated in the Jewish learning, before he became a convert to the Christian faith. According to an ancient legend he was a painter, and on this traditional ground has been chosen the patron saint of painters, academies and chapels in the region of art being placed under his particular care. But Paul, in his epistle to the Colossians, expressly calls him "the beloved physician," and he was doubtless Paul's companion in

some of his journeys and a fellow-laborer in his ministrations of the gospel. But we need not try to disentangle and trace out minutely the thread of his early biography. For the chief character he appears in is that of being himself the biographer of Christ, and reporter of the first proceedings of Christ's followers. We must look for the man in his work. As we are scarcely acquainted with Homer and Shakspeare save in those marvels of human genius which bear their names, so we must know Luke in his simple accounts, which, deeper than any poetry, have moved the heart of the world.

By way of eminence, before all others, he is the historian of our religion. More than a fourth part of the whole New Testament is from his hand. It may not be fanciful to suggest that his professional tastes disposed him to the accurate investigation of facts. Indeed the beginning and method of both his narratives, indicate that turn for historical research, which is one of the marked varieties of human talent. For those Christian annals, which must always be the foundation of Christian belief, we are indebted to him more than to any other. Of the four gospels his is the most full and extensive, most regular in its arrangement, shows the greatest richness and power of style, and gives most manifest indications of a liberally cultivated intellect, though all of them make one noble monument of the Saviour. The publican, Matthew, of whose gospel Mark's has been thought an abridgement, the Galilaean fisherman, John, and Luke the physician, have together so related the life of Jesus as to insure the perpetuation of its main substance to all ages; and truly it is cause for our wondering thanks, that an office of consultation for the sick, the bench of a tax-gatherer, and a fishing-ground on a little lake, should have furnished the world's greatest and most influential authors, on the most exalted subject that ever inspired the tongue or pen of man.

It is the peculiarity of Luke, that he not only, with the other

S T. L U K E.

evangelists, sets forth that primary spiritual cause, in the life of Jesus, which has so shaken and transformed the earth, but, in his Acts of the Apostles, follows the cause into its effects. He presents the new religion, not only in its Divine basis, but built up, fairly inaugurated, put into complete operation, and possessing the souls of men. He supplies that link between the gospels and epistles, which binds all the records and books of the faith into one transparent volume and perfect covenant.

Perhaps from this, better than any other single point of view, we may behold and appreciate his labor of love. He alone then, we may say, has developed the historical cause and effect of Christianity. Let us note this connection of the cause and the effect. We have but a brief space for a topic deserving a long discussion. First let us mark the cause in the gospel. As, swiftly journeying, our eye runs over a wide landscape; so only in passing can we glance at the scenes through some of which Luke alone carries us, and observe that wonderful figure of the Son of God; announced in his coming by an angel; miraculously born of a virgin; celebrated by the songs of an angelic multitude to the shepherds beneath the stars in the plains of Judea, the spiritual company mingling their voices with the silent beams of the sparkling material host of heaven. The Holy Ghost, like a dove, descends and rests upon him. The devil, for forty days, vainly tempts him. With the power of the Spirit, he teaches in the synagogues; and heals the sick at a touch, or a word. He casts out demons, and raises the dead. He stills the stormy sea, and feeds thousands with a few loaves and fishes. His words are as lofty and superhuman as his works. On the mountain of prayer he is transfigured to converse with the dwellers in glory. He utters discourses and parables with a wisdom and spiritual authority setting apart his words in an insulation of grandeur from all human speech. He defends his conduct from Pharisaic cavils;

foils the accusations of his enemies, to their utter astonishment and fearful silence; and foretells supernatural and astonishing events, which are fulfilled. The sun is dim, and the earth quakes at his crucifixion. The grave opens to let him go forth, and the heavens for him to ascend from mortal sight.

Here, in so hasty and general a sketch, (which our imagination must animate and our memory complete,) is the *cause*, as Luke gives it in his Gospel. Next we look at the *effect*, as it is unfolded in the Acts. There is an argument, both for the divinity of our religion and for the authenticity of these two books of Luke, in the just proportion they display between the cause and the effect. Had the historian of the New Testament represented all as stopping with the cause he unfolds, or as issuing in trivial details, we might be tempted to esteem his statement rather a fiction than a fact. For on such fact, as he assumes to disclose, it was impossible the world should sleep. Such an agency, as he asks us to credit, if real, must prove itself not in a record merely, but in correspondent results. Resistance must be as hopeless against it as against the winds and lightnings. The opposition of men would not avail to stop it, any more than did that royal chair once planted against the tide. But Luke, the great Christian historian, does exhibit the effect in terms as natural and noble as he has delineated the cause. The inference is as great as the fact, the conclusion equal to the beginning. It were more reasonable to doubt that the commentaries of Cæsar or the annals of Tacitus were founded on reality, than to suspect that scenes so vivid, stories so artless, actions and words so stamped all over with the tokens of truth, like those in the Acts, had no support but imagination, or a "myth." We feel, as we go on perusing them, that we are dealing with the elements of history and the heart of reality. Truly is the book called *the Acts*; and while the material used is solid, it is also too vast and sublime easily

to admit of essential error. One may err in comparing little things, and making out small distinctions ; but one cannot well be altogether or greatly mistaken in surveying or describing the loftiest mountains of the globe. And one might as well presume to stand up skeptically and scornfully beside the Himmaleh range, or put into the region of fancy the upheaving convulsions which have tossed, and ridged, and crested the earth among the sailing clouds of the sky, as to assume the infidel's part towards that moral chain of effects which Luke lays bare in his second history, or before the active and producing energy to which he leads us in his first. Better, with less outrage on the conditions of truth, flout as modern inventions the gray obelisks of Egypt, with their inscriptions of an immense antiquity, than set lightly by these more precious documents and less fallible proofs. Sooner say that the prosperity, institutions, customs, and laws of our country, are not the proper effects of the love of liberty in our forefathers' souls and of the blood of sacrifice they poured out on the altar of freedom, than that the state of Christendom is not derived from those higher forces set in motion by the hand and Spirit of God, in the life, and death, and resurrection of his Son. If there have been causes and effects on earth, if any thing has had power among men, then Jesus Christ, a *person* in the Gospel, a *spirit* in the Acts, has had it. *All* power in heaven and earth was incarnate in him, and streamed from him as though the twelve legions of angels had indeed been at his side.

And Luke had the privilege, certainly the greatest in all literature, of telling the first sixty years of his divine tale, within about thirty years being embraced his description of the cause, and within about thirty more, that of the effect. I have spoken of his history as one of cause and effect, and so it beautifully is. In the second period we behold but a reflection of the celestial light of the first. The cloven

S T. L U K E.

tongues of Pentecost, sitting upon each of the disciples, only answer to the dove that descended upon Jesus. The miraculous things they did, respond to his mighty works. Their teachings echo his instructions. Their devotedness emulates and repeats his self-sacrifice. The dungeons they are immured in are reared parallel with his cross, opening from it, and illumined by it. The blood of their martyrdom seems to mingle with that precious stream from his veins, which "cleanseth us from all sin." The original powers and the successive consequences of the religion, in Luke's artless, yet, eloquent and stirring chronicles, do nobly agree, as a mighty river with its source. He points to the fountain and first flow of events which should form the current and fashion the features of all coming history.

How poor appears the common fame, how empty all the vainglory of authorship, compared with these firm records made by a hand trembling with the age of more than four-score years! Well and willingly might the old man die shortly after finishing his double work for his Master. He needs for himself no other memorial than that he has made of his Redeemer. His writing, with no desire but to spread the truth of Christ and God, has had a destiny, yet unfulfilled, to excite the envy and despair of the highest intellectual ambition. How many hands, now cold, have turned his leaves! How many eyes forever shut, have read his pages! How many languages, living and dead, or kept alive by them, have recited them as their richest treasure! On the tables of how many hearts have they been inscribed in the characters of life and salvation! Nay, how is the very Spirit of God waiting to engrave them more deeply and sensibly on our own! Lo! that spring of influence, which eighteen hundred years ago poured out upon the world is not yet dry. That magazine of power is not exhausted. Those weapons of no carnal warfare, are still mighty to pull down the strongholds of wickedness. Those motives, which

S T. L U K E .

once drew men, as with violence into the kingdom of heaven, are as strong as ever to draw us onward and upward. What is lacking but that we should come more within their scope, attach ourselves to their glorious train, surrender our hearts to their possession, and courageously wield their armor for the triumph of that King to them who are of the truth. Then the old eternal cause, which was in Jesus from the living and first Cause of all, will vindicate its blessed might, and the biography Luke wrote of Christ not be separate in our hearts from the history of Christ's followers !



ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST.

BY THE REV. W. E. WYATT, D. D.

"THE disciple whom Jesus loved." By the illustrious men whose history is upon the sacred page, agents in the most stupendous transactions that have aggrandized our race and our globe, no title was ever borne denoting as much honor, or more worth. Abraham was distinguished not only as "the father of the faithful," but as "the friend of God." Moses, the champion of his countrymen, was styled "the man of God," and "the servant of the Lord." David was "the man after God's own heart." Simon was "the rock," because of the imperishable nature of the doctrine which, with a corresponding spirit, he was forward in proclaiming. The sons of Zebedee were styled "sons of thunder," in reference to the zeal and boldness with which they adopted the cause of their Master. And each title implies that they were objects of special Divine regard, on account of the qualities thus indicated, and fitting them for their great offices. But among them all, where is there an appellation investing the possessor with such a mild refulgence of glory as that of "THE DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED?" The traits of character, and the incidents of the life, which won so enviable a distinction, must possess a powerful claim upon our regard.

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST.

St. John, who was the youngest of the apostles and yet survived them all, was the son of Zebedee and Salome. Of his father nothing is recorded, but that he was a fisherman by profession; and was with his sons—James the Greater, and John the subject of our present sketch—upon the Sea of Galilee, when, early in the Saviour's ministry, they were called to follow him. Salome, the mother of these two disciples, was one of those devout women who ministered to our Lord, and sometimes attended him in his journeyings. Amidst the panic and consternation which drove almost every follower from Calvary, she forsook him not. She was with the holy women who carried sweet spices to embalm his body in the sepulchre, and to whom the angel announced his resurrection. From a mother thus courageous in her faith, and warm and tender in her devotion, what fruits might we not expect in the life and character of her offspring! O, what transports await the developments of the Great Day, when in the noble virtues and achievements of a child, in the knowledge diffused, and victories gained, and moral power exerted throughout his age and generation, a Christian mother shall discover the fruits of her humble toils, and secret prayers, and unwearied sacrifices, and holy example! Until that day, to God alone it is given to trace such causes and results. But let devout parents trust, that though they may sometimes "sow in tears, they shall reap in joy." Salome obtained the crown of martyrdom, but writers differ in regard to the scene of her translation.

St. John relates not the circumstances of his own call to be a disciple; but the other evangelists concur in the account of the promptness with which he and his brother obeyed the summons of Christ; for it is recorded, that "forthwith they left their father, with the hired servants, and forsook all and followed him." This was at a period in the Saviour's ministry when comparatively few indications

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST.

of the power which he possessed, and of the honor which might accrue to his followers, could have been afforded; and when, therefore, the evidence of manly and generous confidence and sagacity, was more worthy of admiration.

The perfect truthfulness and conformity to nature of the writings of the evangelists, are nowhere more apparent than in their narratives of events in which they themselves were prominent actors. Called by the Saviour's own voice, surrendering themselves to him by one generous impulse, witnesses at once of his divine power, it might be expected that they would have been shown out as fraught with a perfect principle of faith; rising above all the common infirmities of our nature; attaining, in an hour, the full stature of the man of God; ripened with a supernatural grace to the wisdom, and spirituality, and victory over the world, which other men might require years to reach. But we are not allowed to imagine that such was their case. No overwhelming convictions destroyed their moral liberty. Like other men, they were left to the exercise of their reasoning powers, upon the evidence afforded them in the teachings and actions of the Saviour; and if they enjoyed peculiar privileges, they encountered peculiar trials also. Yet slow—to us it may seem inexplicably slow—was the entrance of their minds into the nature and object of the Saviour's mission. They had national prejudices to be dissolved, deep human passions to stifle, the world's influence and interest to thrust aside. And had they been caused at once to foresee all the terrible adversity which awaited their Master, perhaps no ordinary force of faith and devotion might have been sufficient to sustain them. But it is remarkable that it was immediately after a full and minute disclosure of the cruel death prepared for him, to be preceded by every form of humiliation and suffering, that, with the concurrence of Salome, John and his brother deliberately yielded to an impulse, and conceived a plan,

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST.

of earthly ambition. They prefaced their application with a request that the Saviour would pledge himself to do what they required; thus proving the absence of any conviction among them that he had already promised supremacy, or pre-eminence, to either of their companions. They asked that they might "sit, the one on his right hand and the other on the left, in his kingdom." "Ye know not," said Christ, "what ye ask." So innate and inseparable in the Jewish mind was the expectation of a Messiah, who should reign magnificently over all the kingdoms of the earth, and through whom his followers should be rewarded with eminence and wealth! Much greater may be the guilt of those who reject Christ in the present day, than that of an infatuated Jew refusing to believe in one by whom the fond and ancient hopes of his nation seemed to be trampled upon. With equal kindness and caution, again and again, the gracious Redeemer seized upon moments in which some wonderful display of his attributes had kindled in them more than usual esteem, and admiration, and trust, that he might foretell the ignominious doom that awaited him. But as often it is recorded that "they understood not these sayings;" "they understood none of these things, and were afraid to ask him." But when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered what he had foretold.

Another incident also in the life of St. John serves to show that, notwithstanding all the power and majesty of the Saviour's ministry, the apostle was left, as we are, to the gradual influence of divine teaching and ordinances, for the gradual subjection of natural passions, and for his transformation into the exalted perfections of the believer. "It came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, that he set his face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before him, who entered into a village of the Samaritans to make ready a lodging for him upon his journey." But the jealous sectarians would

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST.

not receive him. Other Galileans going to Jerusalem were permitted to pass through Samaria. But they were incensed that a teacher and doctor so eminent as Jesus had become, by passing through Samaria with the known design of celebrating the passover in Jerusalem, should thus far pronounce upon the great controversy between the two people, whether the temple at Jerusalem, or on Mount Gerizim, was the true place of divine worship. And for this condemnation of their cause, they denied him the hospitality of their town. And when John and his brother saw this, in their honest indignation they said: "Lord, wilt thou that we call down fire from heaven, and consume them, as Elias did?" They alluded to the judgment of Elijah upon the two companies successively of fifty men each, whom Ahaziah had sent to seize upon the prophet. It was to avenge his declaration that the king should die, because he had sought to know the issue of his disease from Baal Zebul, the god of Ekron, instead of inquiring of the prophet of God. The captain of fifty, to draw the prophet into a snare, said: "Thou man of God, the king hath said, Come down quickly. And Elijah answered: If I be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And there came down fire from heaven, and destroyed them." No doubt it was a salutary fear of Divine displeasure which was thus sent into the minds of the people. But it was by kinder providences, and through a different spirit, that Jesus designed to promulgate his Gospel, and to build up the national faith in him. And he turned and rebuked John and his brother, and said: "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; for the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." Weighty is the admonition conveyed to those who regard persecution in any form, or under any provocation, as the handmaid of religion. The Samaritans were both heretics and schismatics. They had established a temple in opposition to that which the

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST.

Almighty had so marvellously appointed, and where alone he had promised to accept the sacrifices of his people. Not only had they wandered from other truths of revelation, but, as Jesus said, they "knew not whom they worshipped." They rejected Christ himself, at the moment in which—after a ministry of unexampled wisdom, and goodness, and power—he was going by a sorrowing path, to offer himself a bloody Atonement for the sins of the world. And well may it have seemed to St. John, that an exhibition of divine vengeance, not from the hands of men, but descending in terrible lightnings from heaven itself, would have attested the truth of his doctrine, sending resistless convictions of his Messiahship to the consciences of the whole nation. Such had been the spirit and the means by which from the moment the children of Jacob were to be emancipated from Egypt, the purposes of God were carried out. The peculiar circumstances under which the Mosaic dispensation was to be introduced and sustained, the necessity of isolating the chosen people amidst the idolatrous nations by whom they were surrounded, and of striking with terror the enemies of the God of the whole earth, that his pure and holy worship might spread among them; all this called for an austerity in the system, and a rigor in its execution, not in harmony with the benevolent spirit of the Gospel. But of that, without its explicit teaching, neither they, nor any class or generation of men, would have formed the remotest idea. And when we see that even the gentleness of St. John's character shrunk not from such measures, we learn how vain is dependence upon an amiable temperament alone, upon vague principles of charity, or social habits and deportment, however refined and subdued, in moments of trial and temptation. To many, moving with gentleness and grace through a charmed circle of society, might it justly be said: "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." While every approach to them denotes respect, and

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST.

each voice that meets their ear is bland, and every phrase is studied in its courtesy, and every measure tempered into watchful conformity to their views and tastes; the task of amiability is a light one, the aspect of dignified equanimity easily worn. But should they be overtaken by disastrous vicissitudes, or encounter a few acts of the world's jealousy, and malice, and caprice; and come in collision, day by day, with the rude passions, and selfish interests of men—how soon might the whole delusive serenity vanish! How soon might they be found ready to strike with shame and anguish a rash object of resentment, or calling down fire from heaven to consume an adversary!

In justice to the apostle, however, it should not be forgotten, that the indignation which inhospitality to the Son of God had provoked in his disciple, was far from the vindictiveness which personal injuries arouse in the unchristian bosom; that St. John, resenting the injustice of the Samaritans to his beloved Lord, felt as a devout Jew, was kindled with zeal for the insulted temple, and rejected Messiah; and that the rebuke of his gracious Master applied to the mistaken means which he would have employed *in vindicating the cause of religion*.

Various considerations no doubt combined in the selection of the twelve whom the Saviour, in the commencement of his ministry, drew about him to be instructed in his doctrines, witnesses of his miracles, and agents in organizing his church. Their poverty and obscurity, perhaps the very absence of intellectual culture, and possibly in some cases even of boldness and energy, "that our faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God," were traits which, uniting with their acknowledged purity of intention, and capacity for steadfast adherence to their purpose, caused them to be selected as companions and instruments of our Lord.

But, together with these, there were, no doubt, higher qualities fitting others to be prominent in the noble enterprise; and such we

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST.

find generally present upon occasions of peculiar interest and moment. St. John was one of the four to whom alone Christ delivered the first solemn prediction of the approaching doom of Jerusalem and Judea, a fact upon the foreknowledge of which the safety of the early disciples should depend, and the faith of the church should be defended and strengthened. But those most frequently honored in being specially chosen to accompany him, were Peter, and James, and John. This was not an accidental association, for in relating Christ's raising from the dead the daughter of Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, the evangelist writes, that "*he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John.*" In that mysterious and august disclosure of his Divine glory, which was afforded by the transfiguration, an exhibition which must have inspired the beholders with indescribable admiration and awe, they also were the only witnesses. And in that fearful hour of agony in the garden, when his soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death, when even Jesus desired the support of human sympathy and affection, it was unto John, with Peter and James, that he said, "Tarry ye here, and watch with me." But pre-eminent among the twelve as were these in his confidence and esteem, still more distinguished above all was the regard in which the Son of God held the apostle whose history we are reviewing. The evidences of this in the life of St. John are worthy of particular notice. Through the Roman mode of reclining upon a couch at their meals, St. John, being next to his Master, was enabled to lean upon his bosom, an attitude which then could neither have been accidentally nor commonly assumed, for it is thrice mentioned by the evangelist; and the brevity of the scriptural narratives, the severe caution of the sacred penmen to shun such a mention of their own participation in the events which they record, as could indulge or resemble self-aggrandizement; together with the divine guidance under which they wrote;

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST.

all forbid the idea of a trivial motive, or the emphatic exhibition of a trivial circumstance. That the treachery of one of his own chosen followers might not cause it to be supposed that he had been deceived, and had formed a false estimate of character; but on the contrary, that it might contribute to prove to them his perfect knowledge of the most strange and hidden events, he made known to them the guilt of Judas before it was consummated. The mention of it saddened his own heart. "He was troubled in spirit, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. Then the disciples looked one on the other, doubting of whom he spake. Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom, one of his disciples whom Jesus loved." Simon Peter, therefore, aware that the affection and familiarity manifested by the Saviour towards St. John, would warrant him in asking an explanation of the terrible fact, upon which they could not venture, "beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake. He then, lying on Jesus's bosom, saith unto him, Lord, who is it?"

With a sacred fondness, upon another occasion, the apostle thus alludes to the same incident. After the resurrection, when our Lord had given to St. Peter some mystic intimations of what the trials of his faith were to be, "St. Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following, which also leaned on his breast at supper, and he saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus answered, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" As if he had said, If I will that, even amidst the impending storms of persecution, his life shall be prolonged, and that he shall remain in Galilee until the destruction of Jerusalem, (often spoken of by sacred writers as the coming of the Lord,) how can that affect your own duties and destiny? The observation, however, was misunderstood, "as if Jesus had said, he shall not die." But the singular reiteration

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST.

of the fact of St. John's reclining upon his Master's bosom, and his designation of himself five times as the disciple whom Jesus loved, afford an interesting view, not only of the warmth and tenderness of the Apostle, but also of one of the striking traits in the Saviour's character. Some minor incidents in his life, viewed in connection with it, may be necessary to illustrate this point. There came to Christ with great earnestness upon a certain occasion, a young man, "who kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus having enumerated the articles of the moral law, "the young man answered, All these have I kept from my youth up. *Then Jesus, beholding him, loved him*; and said, One thing thou lackest; go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved, for he had great possessions." From the Saviour's immediate reply, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God," we are allowed to infer, that this young man failed to enter in; and yet, notwithstanding the defects of his imperfect character, and the admitted absence of a justifying principle, there was in the Saviour's bosom a regard for him, which St. Mark mentions, as if it were some peculiar favor and partiality. Again, when the Redeemer was informed of the illness of Lazarus, the message was, "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." St. John then adds, "Now *Jesus loved* Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." In this instance also, something more than his universal benevolence must be designed, for that could have no force as a distinctive indication of any one. Neither could the allusion be to the future state of the parties, for therein "God is no respecter of persons." When they were conducting him to the grave of Lazarus, "Jesus wept," and it was the observation of the Jews that were present, "*Behold how he loved him.*" He had then exhibited a more than ordinary degree of affec-

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST.

tion for certain friends, while nothing is *recorded* to denote or intimate any singular degree of moral excellence upon which his attachment was grounded. Another observation of the Saviour may have a similar bearing. "One said to him, Behold thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. And he answered, Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hands towards his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren; for whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." Neither consanguinity alone, nor the virtues which he knew his mother and his brethren to possess, could give them an *exclusive* claim to his strongest affection. All this then corresponds with the alleged existence of a special attachment between St. John and his adorable Lord. It was continually exhibited. Among all the disciples, some no doubt like Nicodemus having wealth and distinction, the selection of St. John by his Master to afford an asylum in her bereavement to his mother, implied the strongest reliance upon his fidelity and affection. The boldness, and impetuosity, and vows of St. Peter failing to sustain him, upon the apprehension of Jesus by the soldiery, he, with others of the twelve, had concealed himself and fled. And St. John was the only apostle who shrunk not from the terrific spectacle of the crucifixion. But who can picture to the mind all the anguish of that trial, the convulsions of the apostle's soul, as amidst the darkness, and shouts, and reproaches of the infuriated multitude, he feared them not, saw them not, and beheld only the dying agonies of his friend!

Is it not then an inference fairly to be drawn, that the Saviour's divine attributes did not extinguish in him, nor counteract, nor modify, any of the worthy traits which belonged to his human soul? Sin only excepted, he felt as we feel; endured conflicts as we do; desired what we desire; mourned as we mourn; loved as we love. Thus he sanc-

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST.

tioned and hallowed those emotions and impulses in us which are vestiges of the noble nature originally in Paradise; which were designed to constitute its bliss, had we not fallen; and which, when purified from all remaining taint and infirmity, will yet impart the higher bliss of heaven. Affections which the Saviour indulged in common with us, are not perishable, not frivolous and unmanly, not to be laid down with the dust of the body in the grave; but they shall be the elements, when perfected, of the exalted, transporting, everlasting felicity of the redeemed. In the incarnation, the Saviour assumed, and in his life exhibited, a perfect model of humanity. In him was nothing incongruous with that image of God, which was our first lofty prerogative. Apart from those acts which disclosed the adorable perfections of the Deity, there was nothing in Christ into a resemblance to which we might not desire to be transformed; and the writings of St. John furnish the most effective means for such an attainment. He has recorded in his Gospel more of the conversations and teachings of Christ, than either of the other historians. His epistles seem to be but an enlargement or exposition of those divine teachings. And his peculiar relation to our Lord, which the Saviour was equally prone to cherish and disclose, appears to be a practical embodiment, and exemplification of the spirit of love which the Gospel breathes. Men differ in their original constitution and temperament. The circumstances under which in youth they are providentially placed, and through which the character is moulded, and receives its peculiar stamp and tone, differ also. And thus, while in some even a morbid sensitiveness is fostered, tenderness and gentleness in others are early crushed, and become almost extinct. Neither safe nor just would it be to present that tenderness and gentleness by the side of moral obligations, with the force of an injunction, as a condition or test of qualification for heaven; and yet, the brightest happiness of heaven

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST.

may in part be derived from the exercise of those very affections. "Beloved," saith St. John, "let us love one another, for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." Herein, or by the knowledge of this, our love to our neighbor is carried to such perfection, that we can have boldness in the day of judgment; because, as he was benevolent and loving when upon the earth, so are we in this world. That there will be different degrees of happiness and glory in the future state of the blest, is admitted by all, "as one star differeth from another star in glory." And it may well be imagined, that they who have here imbibed the closest resemblance to the traits of Christ's human perfections, will also be qualified for the loftiest enjoyment of the promises hereafter. In a word, then, to exemplify in a living model the beauty and felicity of the Christian character, otherwise inculcated in his doctrines, the Saviour vouchsafed to admit one of his disciples to a singular degree of familiarity and affection, which, exciting and stimulating him to the highest degree of virtue here, might prove a qualification for approaching nearest to him in that joy, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it yet entered into the heart to conceive. Oh the bliss, which, among the countless multitude of bright, loving spirits in heaven, we are taught to expect, through the formation and indulgence of holy attachments! Oh the insupportable remorse and torment of the lost soul, which, having been selfish, and heartless, and morose upon the earth, shall there find itself alone, unloved, abandoned, to mourn out without sympathy and companionship, the ages of its dark, everlasting doom!

Having received the sacred charge of providing for her, "whom all generations shall call blessed," St. John from that hour took her to his own home. But in all his writings, he added nothing more in

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST.

relation to her. She survived, it has been commonly supposed, about fifteen years, but no circumstances in relation to her death are recorded. And as it was not to her that the fact of the resurrection was first communicated; nor to her, but to Mary Magdalene, that the risen Saviour first manifested himself; neither was she present when he was taken up into heaven; and as, after that time, her name appears but once in all the Scripture narratives, we cannot imagine that the apostle or our Lord deemed a knowledge of her subsequent history important to the church.

St. John remained at the cross until he had seen the mystic blood and water flowing from the Saviour's side, when opened by the soldier's spear. And, again, he was the first to reach the sepulchre upon the rumor that the sacred body had been taken away. He was with the eleven at the sea of Galilee, and when the great commission was given which sent forth those men who were witnesses of the august events of the Saviour's life, to found upon the faith of them a Church, which should exist through all the revolutions of empires, spread itself more widely than any secular empire, and be unshaken through all the convulsions of the earth and time. St. John continued preaching in Jerusalem, and was twice imprisoned by the vindictive rulers and Sanhedrim. When Philip had baptized the Samaritans, St. John, together with St. Peter, was sent to them by the apostles, that through them they might receive the Holy Ghost. This is the last circumstance recorded in Scripture of his ministry. It is said, that "having planted churches at Smyrna, Pergamos, Laodicea, and many other places, his activity and success brought upon him the displeasure of the Emperor Domitian," during whose reign he was banished to the Island of Patmos, in the *Ægean* Sea. Prior to his banishment, it is related by Tertullian that he was carried to Rome, and thrown into a caldron of boiling oil, from which he came

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST.

forth unhurt. But Irenæus, and others who have written upon the sufferings of the apostles, do not mention this circumstance. He is commonly represented with a cup, from which a serpent is issuing, in allusion to a tradition, that an attempt having been made to give him poison, he caused the venom of the deadly draught to pass away in the form of a serpent.

Of all the books of the sacred volume, none bear the stamp of the distinctive character of the author as do the writings of St. John. The other evangelists wrote before there were sects and divisions in the church; and their object was succinctly to relate the facts in the Redeemer's life, and give, without systematic arrangement, a general outline of Christian doctrine. At length heresies and parties arose among them; and it was an early tradition that St. John wrote his Gospel at the request of bishops and other believers in his day, who desired to have from one thus signally qualified and honored by his Master, an exposition of his doctrines; and above all, of the mysterious nature of the Divine Incarnate himself. From the manner in which St. John has omitted to record many important facts in the life of Christ, it is reasonably inferred that he had seen the narratives of the other evangelists; and knowing both their truth and their fulness, he avoided what would have been an unprofitable repetition, and confined himself mainly to such an exhibition of the Saviour's teaching as caused Clement of Alexandria to give his narrative the title of "the Spiritual Gospel." Various opinions have been entertained respecting both the period and the place in which his Gospel and his Epistles were written. The manner in which explanatory allusions to Jewish observances and customs are introduced, seems to confirm the opinion, that they were not written until after the destruction of Jerusalem, when the Gentiles of Asia Minor required to be assisted in understanding the practices and opinions incidentally referred to; although

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST.

among the Jews themselves, and during the prevalence of those customs, such explanatory remarks would have been redundant. The great fact, which interests every subsequent age, is the extraordinary concurrence among all the early Fathers of the Church in regard to the name of the author of those writings, and to the inspiration under which he wrote. It would be out of place, in so familiar a sketch as this, to quote at length the catalogue of names, or the language of those ancient writers who have testified to the authenticity of St. John's portion of the sacred volume. But it has been the prevailing opinion, that the Epistles were written about the year sixty-nine; the first of which, not strictly catholic, may have been addressed to the Parthians, to whom he had preached. The Gospel was written in Asia, as many imagine, more than twenty years after the destruction of Jerusalem; and its object was to refute the errors of Cerinthus, the Gnostics, Ebionites, and other heretics, all of whom had adopted false views of the person of Christ, and wild speculations upon the Author and manner of the creation of the world. St. John himself relates, that he "was in the Isle of Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ, when he received the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him." Some monasteries of Greek monks remain in the island; and they yet show a cave, transformed into a chapel, in which the apostle is supposed to have written his revelation. It is on the side of a mountain, and the approach to it is by a narrow passage, cut half way in the rock. It is not above eight or nine paces long, and five broad; the ceiling of the cave is a Gothic arch.

It is deserving of remark that the individual deemed worthy of so distinguished an agency in the planting and furtherance of the Gospel, accomplished his majestic work unaided by such intellectual cultivation as was enjoyed by several others of the instruments of Christ.

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST.

This was apparent even to the rulers, and to the multitude, who, after the miracle of healing the lame man in Jerusalem, by endeavoring to intimidate the apostles, had drawn from them a noble defence of the power by which it was effected. We read in the Acts of the Apostles, that "when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled." And an able critic has remarked, that "St. John is generally considered with respect to language as the least correct writer of the New Testament. The style argues a great want of those advantages which result from a learned education: but this defect is amply compensated by the unexampled simplicity with which he expresses the sublimest truths, and by the affectionate zeal and veneration for his Divine Master so conspicuous in every page of his Gospel."

But, notwithstanding, perhaps no portion of the sacred volume indicates a higher prophetic power, and a fuller and richer communication of the Divine Spirit, than the revelation given in Patmos. It has been studied and elaborately expounded, by some of the ablest sacred critics. Mede, Sir Isaac Newton, Bishop Newton, Bishop Hurd, Lowman, and many others, have made its sublime mysteries the subjects of their investigations. "To explain this book perfectly," said Bishop Newton, "is not the work of one man, or of one age. But probably it will never be clearly understood, until it is all fulfilled." And Lowman, who wrote upon it a valuable commentary, said: "Many look upon the Book of Revelations as a sealed book, never to be explained to any certainty or satisfaction. A great critic, Scaliger, was pleased to say, that Calvin was wise because he did not write upon the Revelations. And another, who has written with great reputation on the other books of the New Testament, Dr. Whitby, confesses that he touched not the 'Revelations' for want of wisdom; that is, as he himself says, 'because I neither have sufficient reading nor judg-

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST.

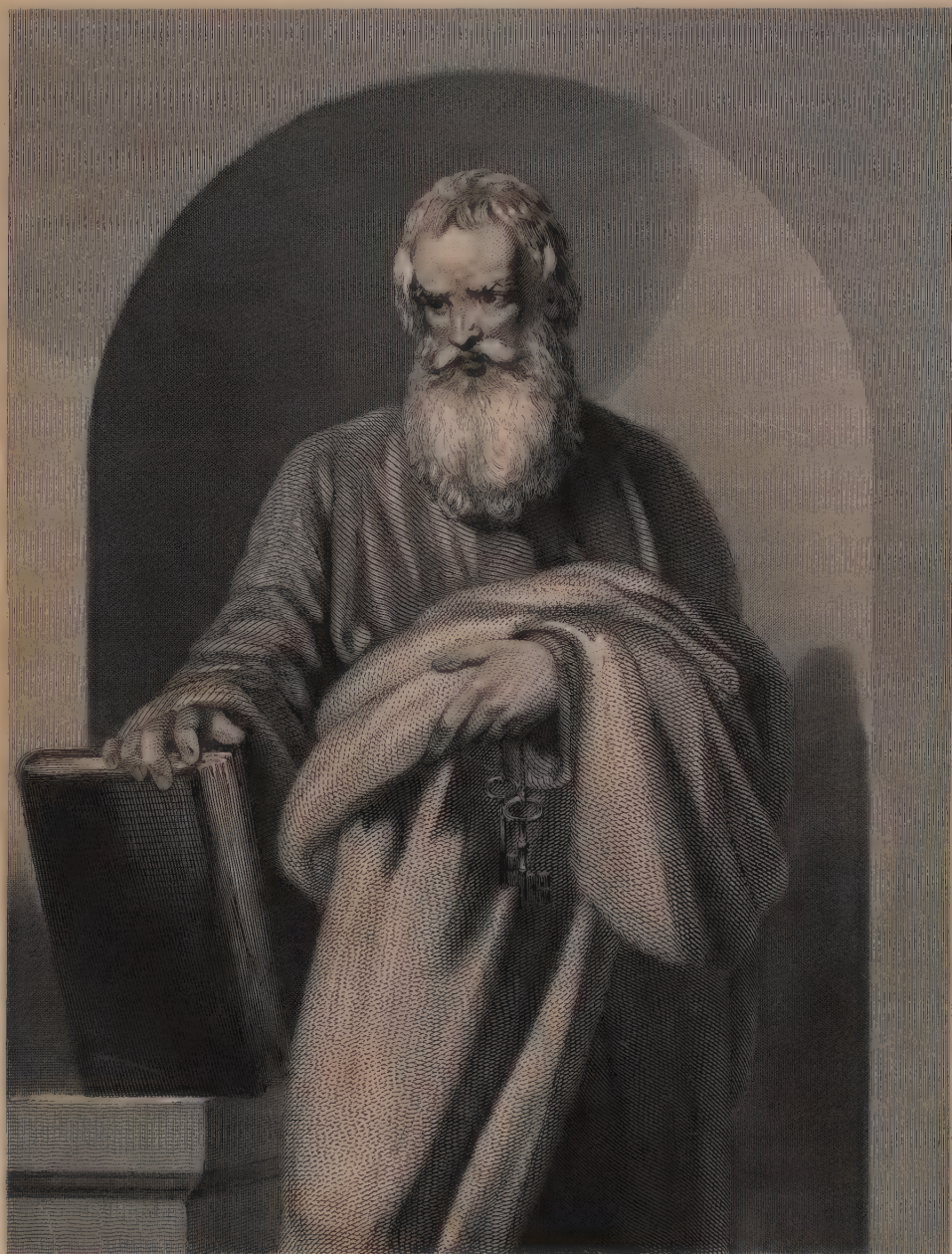
ment, to discern the intendment of the prophecies contained in that book.' ”

St. John was in banishment about two years; Irenæus supposes it was five years; and an African bishop relates that the design of the emperor was to cause him to work in mines, not now known to exist. After the assassination of Domitian, the Emperor Nerva decreed the return of those who had been banished for their Christian principles by his predecessor; and the apostle returned to Ephesus, where he then wrote his Gospel. It was during this period, that there is related of St. John an incident equally interesting and characteristic. Among his disciples, there was a pagan youth, in whom the aged apostle had discovered noble traits that awakened all his zeal and affection; and he reared him carefully, and watched him jealously, and at length rejoiced in the lovely fruits of grace in his youthful convert, to the faith of the crucified Saviour. During some of St. John's distant journeyings, however, in planting the church, the ardent impulses of the inexperienced and unguarded Christian received a dangerous direction; and he was thrown unexpectedly into associations which first chilled, and then sullied, his principles; and with a desperate spirit, he fled from the scene of his former devotion, and was soon associated with a band of robbers in the wilderness. It was a mournful greeting which this narrative gave to the venerable apostle upon his return to Ephesus. But worn as he was with age and toil, his loving heart could find no repose; and having ascertained the direction in which the banditti were supposed to be concealed, he sought them in their fastnesses; and throwing himself into the midst of the ferocious men, he demanded an interview with his recreant son. And he never forsook him, until his tears, and prayers, and expostulations, had reached the bruised heart, and startled the slumbering conscience, of the apostate: and casting himself upon the bosom of the aged

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST.

apostle, the youthful penitent renounced his guilty companions, and returned to live and die, it is said with a martyr's crown, in the holy faith of the Saviour, from whom for a season he had strayed.

The disciples of St. John, notwithstanding his great age, were accustomed to bear him to their public assemblies, until at length the whole instruction he was able to give, was comprised in the characteristic words, "Little children, love one another." He died at Ephesus, in the ninety-eighth year of his life; but many have maintained that he survived much above one hundred years. Some of the fathers speak of his sepulchre being in that city, which they consider richly ennobled by possessing the remains of "the disciple whom Jesus loved."



John Wood

E. Pinder

St. Peter

S T . P E T E R .

BY THE REV. W. HAGUE, D. D.

"Its apostles, lowly fishermen!" This brief sentence, from the lips of an eminent orator, enfolds an argument for Christianity, by bringing to view an impressive contrast between the splendor of its early triumphs and the humble means employed for its propagation. The Christian history affords no finer realization of the spirit of this argument, than that which is embodied in the life and character of St. Peter. Of obscure parentage, a Galilean by birth, bred to hard manual labor, unknown in his youth to the leaders of society, destitute of every scholarlike accomplishment, it has been his, nevertheless, to wield a sceptre of moral power over the civilized world; and, having achieved a sublime mission, to leave among men a name which still dwells on the lips of millions throughout those realms which once owned the dominion of the Cæsars, but where the names of the Cæsars are now recalled only by the mute memorials of a perished empire.

A peculiar and well-marked character has always distinguished those who "go down to the sea in ships and do business on the great waters." In our day they are known, as a class, by a certain freedom and boldness of soul, a generosity amounting to self-forgetfulness, a

highly sensitive nature having in it a dash of the poetic element, a genial enthusiasm with a tone of lofty daring, a passionate impetuosity, strangely chastened at times by a serious spirit and a power to execute the most sober purposes. The alternate rest and stir, the tedium and excitement, the tameness and sublimity pertaining to the scenes of sea-life, have operated on men in every age with a degree of uniformity in producing this style of character, of which Peter, in his earlier days, appears to have been a fair representative. All the nobler features of it he retained to the last; but his Master's discipline so effectually raised what was low, and strengthened what was weak, that he became "as another man." A hint of this great change to be wrought in him, was given by our Saviour on his first meeting with this disciple; for he said to him, "Thou shalt be called Cephas," or as the Greeks express it, Peter—that is, a rock: intimating that he who was naturally rash, fitful, and impulsive, should become a man of adamant firmness, of granite-like strength, able to sustain the weighty burdens that were to be laid upon him, and to resist the shocks of a hostile world.

Some of the most interesting events in St. Peter's history, are associated with "the Sea of Tiberias." It was only sixteen miles in length, and four in width; yet was called a *sea*, as the Jews denominated any large collection of waters. Indeed, we sometimes do so ourselves; as, for instance, a certain expanse in the Hudson river is called "Tappan Sea." The original name of the lake was Chinnereth, from a city on its banks which is mentioned in the Book of Judges. This was corrupted into Gennesaret. On the site of this old city, Herod built a new one, which he named Tiberias in honor of the Roman emperor; and this new city gave a new name to the lake, as we are reminded by the use of the phrase in John's gospel. A fine sheet of water is always a beautiful addition to a landscape; but when we can connect

ST. PETER.

it with the names or fortunes of those whom we delight to honor, the charms of the scenery are wonderfully enhanced. Then memory loves to linger around it; the plains or mountains that encircle it have new beauty, and all its shores are sacred. Under the magic spells, which such associations awaken, must the disciples have indulged many a retrospect of Gennesaret. There the pious fishermen, who had been accustomed to live upon its surface, had been called by the Saviour to be "fishers of men." There they had seen marvellous displays of their Master's power. There, in the sunshine and in the storm, in the soft moonlight and in the dark night-tempest, they had communed with Nature in her varied aspects of grandeur and of loveliness; but, more than all, there they had seen their Lord walk upon the deep as if it had been a marble pavement, and when he said to the rough surges, "Be still!" all were hushed to peace. There Peter had received his call to leave the employments of his youth, and to enter the school which was to fit him for his apostleship. It was on that occasion that the disciple, awe-struck by a view of Christ's divine majesty, revealed as it had been in the miraculous draught of fishes, fell trembling at his feet, exclaiming: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" At once, the calm voice of Jesus soothed the agitation of Peter's spirit, and inspired him with a holy confidence as it announced the exalted mission which he was destined to fulfil.

If the genius of a *Salvator Rosa*, so much at home upon the sea, were employed in placing on the canvas, scenes in the life of Peter, with what power would it set before us the contrast between the attitude of the trembling disciple while prostrate on the shore, and that bolder one in which he afterwards appeared, when, with unshrinking step he trod the threatening billows, that there he might greet and adore his Master! It was night. The storm was on the

deep. "The ship was tossed with the waves." The skill and strength of the Galilean crew were not an equal match for the raging elements. The terrors of the hour would naturally awaken a feeling of wonder that their Lord should have "constrained" them to embark on an errand to which the powers of heaven seemed so adverse. Confidence and hope were fast dying away; a sense of loneliess had already given place to a mental gloom more terrible than the roar of the tempest, when, dimly in the distance, a human form was seen moving at ease upon the agitated waters. It came nearer; it was clearly discerned by all; one thought flashed on every mind, and that thought was, "This cannot be flesh and blood." A solemn dread, which is common to men when confronted in any way with the supernatural, took full possession of every breast; and, doubtless, it was with tremulous tones that they said one to another, "It is a phantom." There they stood gazing on that strange sight, each realizing in himself the words of the ancient Temanite—"In thoughts from the visions of the night fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake; then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up; and I heard a voice." But the voice which they heard was of no unearthly sound. Calmly, sweetly, and in tones familiar to their ears, it addressed to them a message, such as stormy winds had never wafted before: "It is I, be not afraid." The heart of Peter answered to that appeal; for, what a sublime faith was that which filled his soul, when, rising superior to all mortal weakness, or mortal strength, he sought permission to hasten and meet Jesus, while yet he lingered on the swelling surge! He asked for no promise, no pledge of help; but when Christ bade him "come," with what buoyant energy he stepped from the quivering plank upon the forbidding wave! What a moment of triumph was that! Not Moses himself, when he stretched his mystic rod over the Red Sea; not Elijah, when from the top of

Carmel he called fire from heaven to attest his mission, can be said to have taken firmer hold on the arm of Omnipotence, or to have exerted a more kingly sway over the powers of nature. In the picture-language of ancient Egypt, a pair of feet walking on the water was the emblem of an impossibility; and the scene of this eventful night must have interpreted to the mind of Peter the sense and scope of that remarkable promise—"Nothing shall be impossible unto you."

In surveying human character, we find no feature of it that calls forth from every beholder an admiration more profound than that high-souled "decision," which John Foster has so nicely analyzed, and so beautifully developed in one of his immortal essays. When it appears on great occasions, even in a bad or doubtful cause, and on a conspicuous theatre of action, it wins universal applause; but when, apart from the gaze of men, it rises superior to the prejudices of education, to popular opinion, to worldly ambition, allies one's fortunes with those of truth alone, and then comes forth to brave obloquy, scorn, and death itself at the bidding of conscience, it exhibits the highest degree of moral sublimity. Especially is it so, when the enduring courage which pertains to decision of character is not pre-eminently the gift of nature, but is seen to spring from *moral* causes, and to inhale its life from the realm of spiritual truth where faith expatiates as in a congenial element. In such an aspect of true dignity does Peter appear before us when he boldly avows his belief in the Divine mission of our Saviour. Having been called upon by his Master to state what was the public sentiment touching this point, he declared that it regarded Jesus in no higher view than that of an ancient prophet revisiting the world; then, being questioned as to his own belief, he expressed his calm conviction that the man of Nazareth was God's promised Messiah. That moment was a great era of his life. In this fearless confession Jesus recognized the spirit that could "bear all

S T. P E T E R.

things," that could stem the current of popular error, wrestle against principalities and powers, and "endure unto the end." Then, with a remarkable force of expression, did he pronounce his disciple "blessed," confirmed him in his apostleship, and gave to him a clearer revelation than had before been made of the exalted ministry to which he had been chosen.

No one who considers the temperament of Peter, what brilliant hopes of an honored and successful apostleship had been awakened within him, can be surprised at the signs of worldly ambition which he sometimes betrayed, and for which he received the most keen reproofs. He had been taught to believe, that the Messiah's kingdom would shortly come; but as to the nature of that kingdom, and the character of its triumphs, his views were very dim. The glowing imagery of the ancient prophets he had understood somewhat literally; and the announcement that his Lord should be crucified as a malefactor jarred so harshly against the tenor of his expectations, that he regarded it, probably, as a figurative expression. The predictions of his Master, on this point, he never understood until the facts ultimately explained them. How hard must it have been for him, educated as a Jew to look for that "anointed king" who was destined to restore the throne of David to more than its former splendor, to construe aright any intimation that the throne of the true Messiah was to be a cross, and that a wreath of thorns was to be his diadem! No wonder is it that, with his views, he even "began to rebuke" his Lord for hinting at a fate so mysterious. After he had visited the Mount of Transfiguration, where Moses and Elias had come to confer with Jesus, where, instead of a frail tabernacle of flesh, a celestial glory had invested him, where a voice like the voice of the Almighty had uttered the testimony, "This is my beloved Son," no wonder is it, that the disciple should be questioning to the very last,

S T. P E T E R .

even on the final journey to Jerusalem, "what the rising from the dead should mean." Neither is it any wonder, if we study the character of Peter by the light of his previous history, that when he found all his bright imaginings dispelled in an instant, when he saw his Master captured by his foes, dragged to the high-priest's palace, and treated with scorn as a weak impostor, by a triumphant government, when he found that his own sword, instead of being made omnipotent for defence like a blade "bathed in heaven," had been bidden back to its sheath—no wonder is it, we say, that he should have become as another man; that his courage, which had been nourished by false conceptions, should have abandoned him; that his reason should have fled, like a pilot swept from the helm by a resistless wave, and that he who had just defied all the powers of earth to move him from his loyalty, should have reeled from his giddy elevation into an abyss of hopeless despondency. The fall of Peter is an event well adapted to instruct mankind in every age, but not to excite that feeling of wonder which springs from the contemplation of a mystery.

The "long-deferred hope" of Peter, that Jesus would triumph over death by baffling his enemies, or by causing them to quail before some word of power, like that beneath whose blasting energy he had seen the fig-tree wither away, probably inspired him with enough of curiosity and courage, in spite of his unhappy mood of mind, to linger around the high-priest's hall of judgment, in order to witness the scenes of the trial which was fast hastening to some fearful issue. He would fain have kept himself apart from the throng, that he might avoid the peril of being recognized. The exhaustion which had caused him to sleep amid the chills of the night in the garden of Gethsemane, had now brought on that sense of cold which led him to approach the fire of coals which the officers had kindled on the pavement of the court. A gleam of light fell on his anxious features;

and, at once, a maid of the palace, whose quick eye caught their expression, charged him with the crime of discipleship. One thought now engrossed his soul; that thought was concealment; and, in obedience to it, the lie by which he denied the charge leaped from his lips as quickly as the sword had leaped from its scabbard in the garden. More ill at ease than ever, he walked out into the porch, where another maid appealed to the men around him with the exclamation, "This fellow, also, was with Jesus of Nazareth;" and, doubtless, for a moment, he supposed that he had quelled all suspicion after he had backed his denial by his oath. But when the high-priest's servant, whom Peter had struck, recognized his assailant with the cry, "Did I not see thee in the garden with him?"—when the attending officers took note of his Galilean accent with the taunt, "Thy speech bewrayeth thee," his chafed spirit rose to cope with the emergency, and driving back his accusers with denials, oaths, and curses, he broke away from the perils that lurked around that ill-fated spot.

To the group who witnessed his style of action, Peter must have appeared as a brave and determined man. Had he been a hypocrite, a mere worldling, like Judas, he would have plumed himself on his daring and his success. He would have justified his conduct by the law of necessity, and solitude would have been less painful to him. But when alone, he came to himself. The shrill cock-crow which hailed the morning's light fell upon his ear, and "opened all the cells where memory slept." His eye had met his Master's glance, and that had moved the deepest springs of sensibility within him. He went out, he shrunk from the sight of friends as well as foes; he writhed in the agonies of self-rebuke, and, by himself, "wept bitterly."

After the record of this event the allusions to Peter in the New Testament are very brief, until he is brought to our view again at the Sea of Tiberias. Having become assured, while in Jerusalem, of the

resurrection of Christ, he returned to Galilee; the other apostles accompanied him, and were assembled at his house in Capernaum. For purposes of hospitality, in order, probably, to procure the means of entertaining his brethren, he excused his absence one evening, by saying "I go a fishing." With hearts all sympathy, they replied, "We also go with thee." So, as the darkness and stillness of the night favored their design, they seek the lake instead of their beds. Bred to their business from early youth, they were, no doubt, expert fishers; but now they labored in vain. The night wore heavily away. In the gray dawn of the morning, they observed a stranger standing on the shore. He hailed them with a friendly voice, saying, "My sons, have ye any thing to eat?" They answered, "No; we have toiled all the night, and have caught nothing." He encouraged them to try again; "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find." They did as they were bidden, and at once the net was full. This effect of the stranger's advice revealed his character. "The beloved disciple" was the first to discover it. Love is eagle-eyed, and the heart often gives a hint to the head. In this discovery, John "outran Peter;" for John was more calm, collected, and discerning. But as soon as that short sentence, "It is the Lord," fell on Peter's ear, he was all zeal, all himself again. That one fact filled and fired his heart; and forgetting all danger, the net of fishes and the need of his assistance, he thought only of being at his Master's feet. Girding on his outer garment, he plunged into the sea, hastening to meet Him whom he adored.

On that shore, a breakfast had been provided for the company; and this social repast became an era in Peter's history. In the presence of his brethren our Lord now turned to the fallen apostle—to him who had said in their hearing, "though all men forsake thee, yet will I never forsake thee"—and asked of him, "Simon, son

S T. P E T E R.

of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" That was a searching question. Peter felt it. He knew its meaning. He remembered his frailty. He could boast no more. But he was conscious of an honest love. And, aware that Christ's piercing eye was on him, he durst boldly avow it. But he could go no further. He could draw no comparisons. He could not glory over his fellow-disciples. He was humbled, yet strengthened. He only answered, "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." That was enough. His tone and manner were beautifully chastened, and the delicate inquiry involving a comparison with others was not repeated. On receiving this reply, Christ immediately raised Peter from the degradation of his fall, confirmed him in the apostleship, and renewed his commission.

But where Peter's sin abounded, "grace much more abounded;" and, as Peter had thrice denied his Master, when Christ forgave him he intended to confer on him a threefold confirmation in his sacred office. Hence he demanded of him, a second and a third time, an avowal of his love. This threefold repetition awakened in Peter's mind sad reminiscences, opened afresh the fountains of penitential grief, and drew forth from him an appeal to Jesus, as the searcher of all hearts, for a recognition of his sincerity. Thrice he received from his injured Lord a special apostolic charge; and now, reinstated in the sight of all his brethren, he could sing, "Thou hast restored unto me the joy of thy salvation, and hast upheld me with thy free Spirit; therefore will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee." From that hour onward, to the close of his career, he rose superior to the weaknesses of his nature, betrayed no more the fitful impulses of his early character, and nobly sustained the dignity of his Christian name. His quick and fiery temper was disciplined to a rock-like firmness under his Master's hand, and he became as a mighty lion tamed to the harness.

S T. P E T E R.

After the apostles had witnessed the ascension of our Lord from Mount Olivet, they returned to Jerusalem, and were assembled for many successive days in that "upper room" which had already been consecrated as their place of worship. From that time, Peter appears as their chosen leader. Although he was never clothed with a formal or official supremacy, he was well fitted for a leadership, which all freely conceded to him. At his suggestion, a new apostle was elected to fill the place of Judas. At the great festival of Pentecost, when men of all nations were convened at the Jewish metropolis, the college of apostles were gathered around Peter while he proclaimed the truths of Christianity. Under the influences which attended his first discourse, three thousand converts were added to the church. Not only did he stand forth in the public view as the counsellor of his brethren, the expounder of their doctrines in the temple and the synagogue, but as their orator and advocate in halls of judgment. The transformation of character in him and in them, was wonderful. Jesus had said to them, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep among wolves;" and, if at any time in field or forest we should see a harmless sheep confront the ravening wolf, it would not be a spectacle more strange than that which was seen in Jerusalem, when the men who had fled terror-stricken from their Master's side, stood serenely forth in sanhedrim and courts to speak in his name, to vindicate his doctrines, and to enforce his precepts. If the modern reader would receive a true impression of the sublimity of those scenes, let him imagine a poor Castilian peasant summoned to the gloomy court of the Spanish Inquisition; not turning pale with fear, but standing there with a calm, undaunted aspect, and speaking forth words of truth with the simplicity of a child, the energy of a prophet, and the noble bearing of a martyr.

When we consider the apostolic eminence of Peter, the moral

ST. PETER.

grandeur of his position, the unsullied character which he exhibited, the dignity of his public life, we are tempted to wish that the sacred history had shed a clearer light on the closing period of his earthly course. We know not the time or manner of his death. His epistles indicate that he lived to an advanced age. The learned and diligent Michaelis has shown good reason to believe, that he wrote them from the Chaldean Babylon, and that there, amid the scenes around which clustered hallowed memories of Ezekiel and Daniel, he spent the last days of his apostleship. The renowned temple in Rome, which bears his name, is said by some to have been built on the site of his tomb. There is no proof, however, that his mortal remains were ever laid in a Roman sepulchre; but we are rather led to the conclusion that He who caused the body of Moses to be hidden from the Israelites, permitted also the body of the Apostle to rest in some quiet seclusion, that none might be tempted to offer his saintly relics the incense of an idolatrous worship. From his home in the far East, he sent his last epistle to the great Christian family, declaring to them that his Lord had shown him that he "must shortly put off this tabernacle." That tabernacle has long since mingled with its kindred dust; but his works survive it, his name is still fragrant, his recorded words are living oracles, and as an inspired apostle, "having authority," he still sits on his throne judging the tribes of Israel.



1775

ST. PAUL.

BY THE REV. SAMUEL H. TURNER, D. D.

MORE than 1800 years ago, a party of determined men might be seen approaching the most luxurious city of Syria. They were under the command of a young Roman provincial citizen, distinguished for extraordinary talent, daring intrepidity, and indomitable perseverance. The enterprise was undertaken with the sanction of the ruling authorities of Jerusalem, from which celebrated metropolis the ardent leader had conducted his devoted band. The object of the expedition, however, was not military. No hostile army was to be met, no opposing city to be conquered, no well garrisoned and defended fortress to be scaled. The high-minded Roman was marching with his invincible companions to a most inglorious field, where disgrace would be enhanced in proportion to the completeness of the victory. The enemy were defenceless men and women. The crime for which they were to be seized and butchered with savage barbarity, was that of worshipping the one only God, of believing in the one only Christ, of abstaining from all evil, and endeavoring to practise every virtue. The Roman leader was a persecuting Jew, and his armed force the ruthless satellites of his powerful will.

ST. PAUL.

SAUL of Tarsus had already given ample proof of his zeal in the cause of bigotry and intolerance. He was prominent as the unrelenting enemy of the rising sect of the Nazarenes. He had become conspicuous at the murder of Stephen; he had "made havoc of the church;" he continued to "breathe out threatenings and slaughter," and "being exceedingly mad against" the disciples of Jesus, he is commissioned by the chief priests to prosecute his unrelenting war against the feeble and the innocent. Flushed with past success in this unmanly contest, and anticipating the like easy victory, he draws near to Damascus. But whilst the eastern sun is pouring out the full glare of his meridian splendor, a more effulgent brightness shines from heaven, dazzles the persecuting party, and blinds the bewildered leader. Struck to the earth in amazement, he listens to a supernatural voice addressing him in his own language, which his attendants probably did not understand: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Heaven itself arrests the madman in his intemperate career, and the "little flock" at Damascus is saved from his wild and ungoverned rage. Agitated at so sudden, so extraordinary, so preternatural a check, he is led all trembling into the city. Absorbed by the horrors of his own reflections, he passes three days of anxious blindness without food or refreshment. He has time to reflect on his past course, on the recent inexplicable wonder, on the Divine purpose in thus forcibly arresting him, on the appearance of the Saviour whose person he had seen, and whose tones of remonstrance had pierced his heart. Where shall the unhappy man look for consolation, but to that Being who seems to have crushed him? "He prayeth;" and his prayer is answered. The good Ananias is sent to give him comfort and direction; sent by "the Lord, even Jesus, that he might receive his sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." Without delay, the bigoted, persecuting Pharisee is baptized; and

S T . P A U L .

without delay, he preaches in the synagogues of Damascus the very faith which he had gone thither to destroy.

Such are the prominent circumstances of the conversion of St. Paul to the Christian religion. No authentic biographical account of the other Apostles contains any thing so extraordinary, or indeed at all comparable. They stand out in bold relief, commanding the most serious attention of all the friends of Divine revelation, and challenging from its enemies the most rigorous and scrutinizing investigation.

It would be a great mistake to suppose that St. Paul's knowledge of Jesus, and of his claim to be the expected Messiah, is to be traced entirely to this event, or that his conversion was instantaneous. The record informs us that three days elapsed between the time of his miraculous call and public profession of Christianity. And what we read elsewhere in the New Testament of his previous life and character, will not suffer us to doubt that he could not have been unacquainted with the circumstances of our Lord's life, which during his public ministry had transpired at Jerusalem. Saul of Tarsus had been living in that city, as a disciple of the calm and learned and judicious Gamaliel. Emulous of distinction, he had taken the palm in Jewish literature and Pharisaism from all his competitors. Sincerely attached to the religion of his nation, zealous for all the superinduced traditions of the elders, a young devotee of his perspicacity and ardor could not have resided in the capital, and frequented the temple, all the time that the prophet of Nazareth spent in the same places or their vicinity, without having had his attention drawn to the character of this remarkable personage, to the claims which he had openly set up, to the doctrines which he had avowed and inculcated, and to the extraordinary facts by which he had proved their truth, and which his bitterest enemies did not dare to contradict. On such a mind as that of Saul, these things must have made a strong

ST. PAUL.

impression. He well knew the history of the novel sect, and that its sentiments tended to overturn the dominant system. With that superciliousness which marked the ecclesiastical chiefs of the nation, he regarded the Nazarenes with unmeasured contempt, and the degraded "people, who knew not the law," although they had been instructed and benefited by the Divine teacher and Saviour himself, as the most contemptible of the earth, and "accursed." The impulse which had been given to the faith of Jesus after the descent of the Holy Spirit, only increased his infatuated rage against the sect with whose origin, history and progress, until the period under consideration, he must have been familiar.

Although we have very few notices of our Apostle before his conversion, they are sufficient to show us, that in all probability his early training prepared him, by the providence of God, for the work which he was destined to accomplish. Tarsus, of Cilicia, which was most probably his birth-place, was so distinguished for literature, that Strabo assigns to it precedence over Athens and Alexandria. At what age the young Hebrew student left his native for the holy city, we do not know. He may have already become imbued with the learning of the Greeks, although we cannot be assured of this from his works; but he must have obtained such a knowledge of their characteristics, as might fit him the better to become an Apostle to the Gentiles. And in Jerusalem, whither he was doubtless sent to become learned in all the wisdom of the Rabbies, he could not but acquire such a knowledge of their systems and peculiarities as would prepare him for controverting it with ultimate success. Thus was Divine Providence directing every step of this man's progress towards the fulfilment of his destiny.

The conversion of St. Paul, and the remarkable circumstances connected with it, are several times recounted. His life and his let-

ters acquaint us with the results of this most important event. On what ground then is it explicable?

Was the subject of these extraordinary statements an impostor, and did he palm upon the world a falsehood? This cannot be, for he had no adequate inducement. He could not thereby have advanced his temporal interests. Not surely by the acquisition of wealth; for none was to be gained but all to be lost by adopting the new faith, which offered its advocates nothing on earth, but confined the promise of its recompense to heaven. Not by any increase of reputation; for the energetic Hebrew, who was descended from a long line of the most illustrious ancestors that the nation could boast, was sure to rise to distinction among the learned and the noble, while the convert to the sect of the Nazarenes would inevitably lose caste, be derided, villified, and spurned even by his nearest relatives, as the associate of the most ignorant and debased, and only fit to herd with the very dregs of mankind. Was it then the love of honorable distinction among the community to which he attached himself that goaded on the ambitious convert? Alas, what could it avail him to rule the wretched flock, whilst the chief distinction to be secured could be nothing more than that of first baring his neck to the murderous knife? Could he have been influenced by well-meaning but fanatical and extravagant hopes? Could he have wished to propagate a religion false in theory, with the view of encouraging its supposed good tendency, and the virtues which its advocates practised? Could he have done such evil in order that so great good might come? have lived a life of deceit to advance the honorable cause of truth? Every biographical statement, every indirect allusion to his history and character, prove that none of these causes could have exercised the least possible influence. Imposition could have had no part in this extraordinary conversion.

ST. PAUL.

Was Saul of Tarsus then a deceived enthusiast? If by an enthusiast were meant a man of ardent temperament, who throws his whole soul into the subject which his convictions have brought home to his conscience, as a matter of absorbing interest both to himself and his fellow-men, and who is not to be prevented from following out those convictions by any less important considerations, doubtless he was an enthusiast, a noble, magnanimous enthusiast, and at the same time under the control of the purest reason. But enthusiasm, in the usual acceptation of the term, is invariably connected with credulity, ignorance, and vanity, and from these qualities no one was ever freer. The supposition of his being led away by enthusiastic and imaginative feeling, is therefore entirely gratuitous.

And a careful examination of St. Paul's history and writings will satisfy any intelligent and candid inquirer, that he could not have been the victim of deceit and fraud. Had any of the early Christians been either weak or vicious enough to have thought of enticing a persecutor into the snare of their own faith, Saul of Tarsus would have been the last man to be selected or influenced. His education had stored his mind with useful knowledge, had cultivated his intellectual powers, and given him an unusual degree of self-discipline. His associations had made him acquainted with men, and taught him caution. He was not the person to become the dupe of the designing; nor would such characters have chosen him for their instrument. The supposition is so fraught with absurdity, that it were the merest folly to spend either time or thought in analyzing it.

The operation of merely natural causes is therefore wholly inadequate to explain the circumstances which are immediately connected with the conversion of the Apostle, and those which the subsequent history of his life developed. His conversion was miraculous; his call was immediately from God; and consequently the Christian

ST. PAUL.

religion which he embraced and taught and defended, is true and divine.*

Some distinguished writers have maintained that St. Paul's appointment to the Apostolic office is to be dated from the fact mentioned in the thirteenth chapter of the Acts, where, in obedience to an inspired direction, "hands were laid on Barnabas and Saul, and they were sent away." But this is inconsistent with plain statements made elsewhere by St. Paul himself. He recounts the language of Christ to him: "I have appeared to thee to make thee a minister." He expressly declares that he had "received his ministry of the Lord Jesus;" that he was "an Apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ;" "by revelation of whom he received the Gospel." The work to which the Holy Ghost called him and his friend Barnabas, they are said to have accomplished. It was their missionary tour, as we may call it, chiefly to the Gentiles, an account of which is contained in the chapter above mentioned and in the one immediately following. The Divine Saviour, who in his lifetime chose the original twelve, and afterwards Matthias, did also, without any human intervention, choose the persecuting Saul, "putting him into the ministry."

The Apostle's decision of character, his firm conviction of the truth of the Gospel, and of the reality of his divine call to preach it, his disregard of every temporal consideration in comparison with his sense of duty to God, are strikingly developed in his conduct immediately after his conversion. In the very city to which he had just gone with authority to punish, and before the very men who were to have been his coadjutors, does he publicly appear as the defender of the despised faith, and the confounder of those who had been his

* See Lyttleton's Observations on the Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul.

bigoted partisans. The place that was to have been the theatre of his raging persecution becomes the witness of his Christian triumph over Jewish superstition and ignorance. Whatever may have been the motive which led him to go to Arabia, his immediate public proclamation of the Gospel at Damascus proves that it could not have been to prepare in retirement for the ministerial office. Into this office the Searcher of hearts, "who counted him faithful," had already put him. The journey to Arabia is entirely omitted by his biographer, and very briefly mentioned by himself to the Galatians. The probability is that he went there to make known the Gospel, either to native tribes, or to Jews who may have settled in the country. Where documentary and circumstantial evidence are both silent, it were useless to indulge in conjecture.

The only authorities from which any authentic particulars may be drawn respecting the life and character of St. Paul, are the Acts of the Apostles and his own letters. Ecclesiastical tradition, as committed to writing, is too late to be implicitly trusted; and, as handed down by oral communication, it is in this case, as in all others, unworthy of attention. The reader who is well acquainted with the latter half of the Acts of the Apostles, and with the first fourteen epistles, which constitute a large and important portion of the New Testament, has in his possession all the sources of information respecting the subject of this notice on which we may confidently rely. Whether the name, under which his reputation has spread even beyond the Christian world, was assumed in consequence of the conversion of Sergius Paulus, the Proconsul (which was occasioned partly by the miraculous punishment of Elymas the sorcerer, and partly by the seasonable impression made by divine truth upon a candid mind), from which fact it dates; or whether, as is the case of Jason and others, the Hebrew orthography yielded to the more agreeable or

ST. PAUL.

fashionable Greek and Latin, is of very little consequence. In our Christian associations, Saul the persecutor is lost in the Apostle Paul. The crawling worm of the earth, grovelling in its native ignorance and obscurity, bursts its contemptible prison house, and, intellectually and morally emancipated, appears in the glorious habiliments of celestial liberty and dignity and truth.

The biographical notices of St. Paul, which are sketched in the simple narrative of St. Luke, bear the strongest internal marks of truth. The author was an eye-witness of the facts which he relates, and participated in the efforts and dangers and deliverances of his hero, of whom he was the companion and personal friend. The outlines which his book contains of the Apostle's occasional addresses in exposition or defence of Christianity, are in perfect harmony with the fuller delineations developed in the Epistles; and the facts which it embodies must excite our admiration at the various noble qualities and traits of character which they elicit. The limits within which this article must necessarily be restricted, preclude any thing like a critical and chronological examination of particular points in the biography of our Apostle. Neither can we present any detailed statement of circumstances relating to his life and travels, the various countries in which he proclaimed the Gospel, the different classes of men whom he influenced, the numerous dangers and difficulties that he encountered and overcame, the triumphs which he achieved, and the noble attestation which by his martyrdom he gave to the truth, and the sublime character of that faith by which he was sustained. The Acts of the Apostles, after recounting his laborious efforts in Asia Minor, the adjacent islands, and the proximate European countries, which were the chief scenes of his ministry, close with a full account of the circumstances which led to his first imprisonment at Rome, where he was treated with marked lenity, and even with

ST. PAUL.

respect. Other and subsequent accounts are, of course, less to be relied on, and consequently certain particulars of his life which have been drawn from them, are more uncertain. His beloved friend and companion, Clement of Rome, in his admirable letter to the Corinthians, which, in Apostolic simplicity and purity, bears a closer resemblance to the inspired epistles than any other composition, expressly says, that in preaching the Gospel, he journeyed to the utmost bounds of the West.* We have also the authority of the same distinguished friend for the statement, that, by the orders of the ruling authorities, he was subjected to martyrdom. His death terminated his second imprisonment at Rome towards the end of the reign of the parricide. In view of the approaching end of his earthly course, the holy man gives vent to his feelings of exultation in the triumphant words: "I am ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness."

The character of the Apostle Paul has been so often and faithfully portrayed, that it would be not only superfluous, but irrelevant, in such a brief notice as this, to attempt another delineation. And yet to pass it over without any remark, would be an unpardonable omission. I must therefore beg the reader's indulgence, while I set before him two or three traits which are particularly prominent, in the character of this great man.

* There can be little or no doubt that the Bishop of Rome employed this phrase to denote Spain, although he may also have intended thereby to comprehend Britain. That the Gospel was originally introduced into the land of our ancestors by Apostles and Apostolic men, of whom St. Paul was distinguished, is stated by ecclesiastical writers of the highest authority, both ancient and modern; and we know from his own declaration that he intended to visit Spain.

ST. PAUL.

The intensity of his religious feeling, the holy ardor which burned within him, and which the extent and depth of his knowledge of divine things served to keep alive and to augment, appears so conspicuously in every page of his writings and in every action of his Christian life, as to make any amplification unnecessary. But we should not fail to note his *boldness* in the cause of truth. When he became satisfied of the duty of pursuing any course of conduct for the promotion of the Gospel, nothing could prevent his making the effort. No prospect of danger could intimidate him. Neither the threats of enemies nor the solicitations of weeping friends could in any degree shake his resolution. He kept in view one clearly defined purpose, and no earthly consideration could possibly interfere with its attainment. What was danger, what was death, to the man who desired to depart? who was reconciled to remain here simply by the hope of advancing the religious cause with which he had identified himself? This same steady and undaunted energy of character prompted him to confute the Jews of Damascus immediately upon his conversion, led him to rebuke publicly the inconsistent and vacillating conduct of St. Peter, and impelled him to make the iniquitous and licentious Felix tremble beneath the most pungent appeals to his reason and conscience.

St. Paul is also remarkable for a proper sense of *self-respect*. No man ever lived who cherished a more sincere or a profounder humility. But it was the very opposite to that sickly sentiment of this divine grace, which pretends to abase, while in reality it betrays both pride and vanity. In the sight of God he felt himself to be nothing. But this did not prevent his demanding from his fellow-men, the rights of his office, the privileges of his state, or the consideration due to him on the ground of personal character. When suspected, by a civil officer of distinction, to whom he was personally unknown, of being

ST. PAUL.

the ringleader of a band of murderers, he claims to be "a citizen of no mean city;" and when, subsequently on the same occasion, he is about to be subjected to a disgraceful punishment, he appeals to his character as unimpeachable, and to the privilege of his rank as a "free-born Roman." And again, after he and his associate had been insulted, beaten, and imprisoned, with circumstances of unusual severity, and the magistrates in alarm had sent orders for their liberation, the lofty spirit of the injured man bursts forth in the tone of his address to the inferior officers, who had been directed to convey the permission to depart. "They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? Nay verily, but let them come themselves and fetch us out." At another time, when one governor, like his unprincipled predecessor, willing to commit an act of flagrant injustice, in order to "do the Jews a pleasure," proposes to the accused Apostle to be tried in Jerusalem, where most probably the influence of his enemies would be sufficient to crush him, the noble-minded prisoner does not hesitate to claim his legal right, while he brings home to the conscience of the crafty governor the meanness and illegality of his proposition to a defenceless man, of whose innocence he was at the same time satisfied. "To the Jews have I done no wrong, *as thou very well knowest; no man may deliver me unto them; I APPEAL UNTO CÆSAR.*"

And this same honorable feeling of self-respect induced him occasionally to vindicate his own character and claims as an Apostle. The legitimacy of his Apostolic rank was questioned by not a few. He was called to the office subsequently to his brethren, and in a manner wholly different. The freedom with which he opposed a tenacious adherence to the Jewish ritual, and especially the imposition of such a yoke on the Gentile believers, awakened the hostility of bigoted and narrow-minded zealots. Very willing to thwart the fearless advocate

ST. PAUL.

of Christian liberty, and to weaken and even destroy his influence, these Judaizing teachers impugned his authority among several of the churches which he had founded. He was therefore compelled to assert his claims; and in so doing he occasionally employs language which, if dissevered from its connection, and viewed without reference to the circumstances which produced it, might seem inconsistent with his characteristic humility, and wear the appearance of arrogance. "Those who were evidently distinguished added nothing to me. I was not a whit behind the very chiefest of the Apostles, and labored more abundantly than they all." But, while with evident consciousness of his rightful claims, he asserts his prerogatives, both of office and personal character, in language not to be misunderstood, the candid reader cannot fail to observe that he does this, not to honor himself, but to maintain the truth. He shrinks from what might look like self-adulation, and his humility of mind naturally bursts out in expressions of deepest feeling. "I labored; yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. I am the very least of all saints, not worthy to be called an Apostle. I have become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me." In the strikingly correct and expressive words of Hannah More, "He always humbles, but never disparages himself."

The humility of St. Paul is shown in the *patience* and *submission* with which he bore the numerous trials to which he was subjected. Perhaps no public man had ever more to contend with. He was misunderstood and calumniated by the very men whom he had benefited, charged with a convenient time-serving policy in regard to what was merely a judicious accommodation in matters of indifference, which his enlarged mind was able rightly to appreciate. His very delicacy of conduct was made an occasion of reproach. He was exposed to the malice of the party which he had felt himself constrained to abandon;

ST. PAUL.

to the hatred of men whose errors and follies he openly rebuked, and who were neither competent to judge of truth, nor willing to accept it; to the abuse of the ignorant, the contempt of the conceited, the misrepresentations of the malevolent, and the rage of popular excitement. He encountered persecutions of various kinds, privations of the ordinary comforts of life, positive corporeal inflictions, dangers and difficulties which he has recounted with so much simplicity of feeling. But he underwent all for Christ's sake, and with a patience and submission which place him as an example of these virtues next in distinction to the Master himself. This trait of character naturally leads to a notice of the particular trial which he mentions as "the thorn in the flesh." The vast variety of strange and contradictory opinions which have been entertained on this point, sufficiently show how impossible it is to arrive at certainty. That it was some corporeal affection is rendered probable by several considerations. He speaks, on more than one occasion, of a physical infirmity, which made his enemies ridicule "his bodily presence as weak and contemptible." With a kindness of heart peculiarly his own, he beautifully reminds some of his ungrateful opponents, that on his first proclamation of the Gospel to them, this did not diminish either their affection or reverence. The connection in which the phrase stands, seems to intimate that it is a figurative expression, denoting some bodily affection occasioned by the frequency and character of the revelations with which the Apostle was favored. "Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, to buffet me." That divine communications should be attended by powerful effects on the physical frame, is in itself exceedingly probable, and has the sanction of very high authority. Maimonides, the most distinguished of the Jewish savans of the middle ages, speaking of prophets, uses this language: "When

they prophesy, their limbs tremble, and their physical strength fails. As it is said of Abraham, a horror of great darkness fell upon him; and of Daniel, My comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. The prophets in general were afraid and troubled, and melted away." And again, discoursing of the prophetic vision: "It is a fearful thing, producing terror which seizes the prophet in a time when he is awake, as it is evidently stated in Daniel, when he says, And I saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me, for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength." This certainly agrees with the representations made by that dearly beloved prophet. "I was afraid and fell upon my face: I, Daniel, fainted, and was sick certain days: my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength." If therefore such extraordinary revelations as were made to the favored Apostle did exert a permanent or long-continued influence on his nervous system, which exposed him even to the ridicule of the silly, it would accord with scriptural analogy. Should the phrase by which the result is described be thought inconsistent with this opinion, it might be sufficient to remark, that such language by no means implies belief in Satan's agency in producing the distress denominated "the thorn in the flesh." It may have been in current use during the Apostolic age, and thus similar to the popular expressions, "St. Vitus' dance," or "St. Anthony's fire," occasionally heard in the present day. But every one knows that this phraseology is employed, without any idea of supernatural agency in reference to the diseases so denominated. But, whatever view may be taken of the character and occasion of St. Paul's distress, all readers must feel that his acquiescence in the Divine will in this particular illustrates his patience and submission. "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for

ST. PAUL.

thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

In further delineating the character of this remarkable man, his Christian *consistency* of opinion and conduct would readily suggest extended remark and illustration, while at the same time it would afford opportunity of vindicating him from the censures of the ignorant and the prejudices of the weak. But this, in common with other traits, must be omitted. Let me be allowed, however, to say a few words in reference to his *practical good sense*, and what may not improperly be called his religious tact. This is indicated in almost every one of his epistles; but I shall confine myself to one or two illustrations selected from his biography.

At the request of certain philosophers, the teacher of a new religion addresses the learned, polite, and fastidious elite of Athens. In passing through the streets of this celebrated city of far-famed Attica, its numerous statues and emblems, representative of divine personages or attributes or characters, impress him with the conviction, that these elegant yet besotted idolaters are grossly ignorant of the real divinity whom they affect to worship, and he burns with holy desire to teach them truth through the Gospel. He would enlighten their understandings and impress their hearts. He begins his address therefore, not by charging them with excessive superstition, as our translation and some others imply, but with a complimentary recognition of a sort of religious feeling which led them to multiply the representations of deity, and even to erect an altar to a God unknown, whom therefore he undertakes to declare to them. And, on another occasion, when he and his companion had been courteously invited by the rulers of a synagogue to speak to the people, he begins by addressing them with the honorable title of Israelites, and as persons

ST. PAUL.

who feared God. He then proceeds to state briefly the distinction which God had shown their common ancestors by delivering them from Egypt, and kindly cherishing them forty years in the wilderness. It is to be regretted that this judicious exordium is so generally misapprehended. The Greek word in the received text is rightly translated in our English version, "suffered he their manners," that is, bore with their obstinacy, faithlessness and idolatry; and the statement is literally true. But such a representation is wholly inconsistent with the context, and also with the ability of the speaker. The change of merely one letter for another of the same organ gives the true meaning of the eloquent orator in the words which I have before employed, and the weight of critical authority both external and internal is decidedly in favor of the change. Yet it ought to be particularly noted, as illustrative of the earnest and conscientious plainness with which our Apostle delivered his message, that the peroration to this discourse, the introduction to which was so remarkable for its conciliatory character, is one of the strongest and most startling appeals ever made to the conscience of the hearer.

Another evidence of St. Paul's skill in adapting himself to circumstances, is contained in the statement made by St. Luke, that on his finding the council before whom he had been brought for examination to consist partly of Pharisees and partly of Sadducees, he elicited sympathy by claiming connection with the more orthodox: "Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; of the hope and resurrection of the dead, I am called in question."

The character of St. Paul must be illustrated in one other particular. He deserves to be beloved for his *kindness of heart* as much as he is entitled to admiration for his nobleness of mind. In this respect, justice has not been awarded to this admirable man. Flip-pant readers of isolated portions of his letters have amused them-

selves, and imagined, doubtless, that they were at the same time amusing others by descanting on his "old bachelor" peculiarities, his contempt of women, his degradation of the married state, and his extravagant estimate of celibacy. Like every thing else of the sort, which such conceited sciolists have adduced to lessen the authority of the Bible, or the character of its prominent personages, these charges are found to originate either in malice or ignorance. There is not a word in St. Paul's epistles, which, rightly understood, is derogatory to the female character. To vindicate his frequent use of the term *woman* would be a poor compliment to the reader's taste, as he must know that the most elegant of the Greek writers employ the same word, and that it is used in describing the most touching scene of the Saviour's expiring life. And how does our Apostle speak of *woman*? He requires her to be obedient even to her own husband. And this was then imposed by universal usage, and is still by general law. He does not permit her to "usurp authority over the man," or "to speak in the churches." That is, he expects her to maintain that propriety of conduct which every female of delicate mind rightly appreciates as her best ornament, and which her own native sense of propriety would suggest. He wishes her to act in life that part which nature prompts and Providence intended. He calls her "the weaker vessel." Why? That the stronger may give her the greater honor: that the man may elevate himself by loving and respecting his wife. The women whom he sharply reprehends disgraced their sex, and were only worthy of distinction in notorious Corinth. It is true that St. Paul does indeed in one of his epistles dissuade from marriage. But he gives a sufficient reason: "On account of the present distress." As a prudent man, and equally kind and affectionate, he advises young Christians of both sexes not to subject themselves to the evils which their immediate danger of persecution would impose upon the married

ST. PAUL.

state. It were far better to suffer alone than to be subjected to the multifold suffering of seeing the dearest objects of earthly affection subjected to the same or greater ignominy; or, what were far worse, apostatizing to avoid it. But at the very time that he gives such counsel, he leaves those concerned to accept it or not, frankly informing them that he has no divine direction on the subject, but as a faithful Apostle gives them his opinion. And in so doing, his only object is, to relieve his converts from increasing embarrassments, and to advance their Christian character. Instead of depreciating the married state, he claims his own right to enter into it, if he thought proper, and represents it as a fit symbol of the intimate union of Christ and his church.

But to vindicate our Apostle from malevolence or ignorance were but a poor illustration of the trait of character under review. It is indeed of some importance to show, that a great man's suggestions and advice have been misconceived, and consequently perverted from their original purpose. This negative testimony, however, does not meet the demands of justice. Paul the Christian was like "the author and finisher of his faith." His heart overflowed with the milk of divine kindness. The one wept over ill-fated Jerusalem; the other mourned the condition of his beloved countrymen, his own dear "flesh," some of whom he would by any means save. The one, three times in succession, spoke of the "worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched," to induce, if possible, obdurate sinners to repent; the other, prompted by the tenderest love, denounced "flaming vengeance on those who obeyed not the Gospel," gave "up to Satan for the punishment of the flesh, in order that the spirit might be saved." Seeming harshness is nothing but the natural development of the deepest affection. Does he upbraid the dear ones whom he had been instrumental in converting? The tenderness of his expressions shows the

motive: "I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you. For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ (literally, *pedagogues*), yet have ye not many *fathers*; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel: because I love you not? God knoweth." He expresses his willingness to sacrifice himself for his unbelieving nation: "I could be willing to become a devoted object for my brethren!" For the feebleness he had the very kindest sympathy, and for children the most affectionate regard. This is shown in his exhortation to "help those women who had labored with him in the Gospel," and also in his beautiful allusion to what no parent can have failed to observe, the forgiving temper in general of little ones: "In malice, be ye children." This is not the language of a cold heart. It is the outpouring of the very best feelings of human nature, elevated and sanctified by the higher principles of a religion divine in its origin and sacred in its influence. And it is this same kindness of heart which suggests his affectionate remembrance in his letters to so many of his Christian friends, whom he had blessed with a knowledge of the Gospel, and whom he often names with some agreeable indication of regard.

Oh! thou man of God! Would that the church abounded with Apostles and Evangelists formed after thine image and according to thy likeness! Then indeed might the millennial age with reason be expected! Then might we look for the speedy coming of that prophetic period, when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord;" when the widely spread delusion of the prophet of Mecca, and the still more extensively disseminated system of pagan idolatry, shall yield to the truth; when the veil that conceals the Gospel from the holy people shall be removed, and Jew and Gentile, wherever dispersed, shall coalesce in the one ISRAEL OF GOD.



ST. ANDREW.

BY THE REV. JOHN LEE WATSON.

THE following particulars, derived partly from Holy Scripture, and partly from such sources as are considered authentic, for the most part given in the very words of the various writers, are all, or nearly all, that can be gathered respecting the life and character of St. Andrew. He was born at Bethsaida, a city of Galilee, which was situated on the lake of Gennesareth. He was the brother of Simon Peter, and, as is generally believed, was the younger of the two. They were the sons of Jonas, who, like Zebedee, the father of the other two brother apostles James and John, followed the humble calling of a fisherman, on the sea of Galilee. But little is known of the early history of these two brothers, St. Andrew and St. Peter. It appears, however, that in common with vast numbers of their countrymen, of all ranks and conditions, they had been attracted to the banks of the Jordan, by the "voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD." It was a cry which thrilled the hearts of thousands; and, "from Jerusalem, and from the region round about Jordan, and from all Judea," men flocked in crowds to hear the startling summons. And how remarkable is the scene brought before us

by the Evangelist, in his narrative of this great event; and how strikingly marked was the aspect of that countless throng of human beings, who poured themselves out into the wilderness of Judea, to listen to the call of one, whom many hastily concluded to be their long-expected Deliverer Himself. There stood the exclusive and hypocritical Pharisee, covered from head to heel with the emblems of his arrogant and boastful sanctity; at once the haughtiest, and most scornful of men. There stood the splendid and voluptuous Scribe, the sceptical Sadducee, the men of affected philosophy, who might have come to scoff at the pretensions of the Baptist, but who for once, perhaps, may have begun to feel that they also had souls for immortality. Here might have been seen the grasping and grinding Publican, the iron-handed gatherer of the odious tribute, which was imposed upon the people by their Roman conquerors. And there, by his side, was the stern and merciless soldier himself, flinging down his sword at the feet of the prophet, and imploring to be purified from blood, by the waters of baptism. And there too, among them all, were found the lowly and simple-minded fishermen of Galilee, who had left their nets and rods, and fishers' boats, to follow the crowds into the wilderness and learn the meaning of that ominous cry, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." And to all those subdued and wondering throngs, did that awful Messenger, garbed, like the prophets of old, with the ancient emblem of sorrow for the sins of Israel, boldly proclaim the truth, and tender to all alike the words of judgment: "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

And some there were, among those listening thousands, who received his testimony with gladness, and believed the words that he spake. Chiefly were they found among those less conspicuous and less cultivated classes of the people, whose quiet occupations and obscure lives had fostered truer hopes and more sober anticipations, than

were entertained by the learned, but sordid and worldly-minded Scribes and Pharisees. The humble fishermen of Galilee were deeply impressed with the teaching of John the Baptist, and forthwith many of them became his disciples.

On a certain occasion, two of these disciples, "one of whom was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother," being in company with their master, heard him say, as his eyes were turned towards Jesus, who was walking by the sea of Galilee, "Behold the Lamb of God." These words of the Baptist seem to have kindled, at once, within the bosoms of the two disciples, an ardent desire to know something more of Him to whom John had given such remarkable testimony; and they immediately began to follow Him. "Then Jesus turned and saw them following Him; and He saith unto them, What seek ye? And they said unto Him, Rabbi—Master—where dwellest Thou?" For answer, they received from the lips of the Master Himself, the gracious invitation, "Come and see." Without doubt or hesitation; without any skeptical fears, or craving after further proofs that He was indeed the very Christ; without waiting even to see the miracles which He should do, in evidence of His possessing the awful attributes of the "Lamb of God, which should take away the sins of the world," they immediately came, and "saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour." What was the nature of the instruction, then vouchsafed to those two disciples, has not been recorded in the pages of Holy Writ; neither has it ever entered into the heart of man, adequately to conceive the great and gracious words which flowed from the lips of the Divine Teacher, during the two hours that they abode under His roof. All that we know respecting its character must be gathered from the effect which was produced upon those two inquiring disciples. They entered the house, ignorant, but anxiously seeking to know, if this were indeed the glorious Being,

who had been foretold in all their wondrous prophecies. After remaining with Him the rest of that day, which even then was far spent, they depart, full of gladness, and full of joy; anxious to publish to others the glorious tidings which first fell from the lips of St. Andrew, "We have found the Messiah." And then, "he first findeth his own brother Simon," and having imparted to him the joyous tidings, "he brought him to Jesus." And then, these two brothers, St. Andrew and St. Peter, having heard and been convinced that they had found the Messiah, returned to their peaceful occupations on the sea of Galilee, and continued there quietly abiding in the calling wherein their lot had been cast by the Providence of God.

Almost a whole year had elapsed since their introduction to the Saviour of the world, when Jesus, walking again by the sea of Galilee, found the two sons of Jonas on the sea-shore, employed in casting a net into the sea; for they were fishers. "And He saith unto them, Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets and followed Him." They had already "come to Him," and been convinced of His Messiahship, and acknowledged Him as their Master. Now He comes to them and chooses them as His disciples. From this time, they were to quit their wonted calling, to follow Him, and be constantly with Him: no longer "toilers in the deep of waters," but fishers in the sea of life: Fishers of men; Heralds of His Gospel; Pillars of His Church.

From the circumstance of his first finding the Messiah, St. Andrew obtained the appellation of the "the First-called;" and because he first communicated the joyful intelligence to his brother Simon Peter, and "brought him to Jesus," he was known, in the early ages of the Church, as "the Rock before the Rock." In St. John's Gospel, he is mentioned as bringing to the notice of our Lord "the lad with the five barley loaves, and the two fishes." He is described also, by the

S T. A N D R E W.

same Evangelist, as instrumental in bringing to Christ "certain Greeks, who came up to worship at the feast" in Jerusalem, and who were desirous of seeing the Messiah. In addition to his name occurring in the number of the Holy Apostles, he is represented by St. Mark as enjoying the special confidence of his Divine Master.

Little is known of St. Andrew beyond these somewhat scanty notices of him, in the Record of Inspiration. According to Socrates, the ecclesiastical historian, the Apostles of Christ, under the especial guidance of the Holy Ghost, determined by the "sacred Lot" what parts of the world they should severally take; and we learn from Eusebius that Scythia, and the neighboring countries, composed the province, or diocese which was thus allotted to St. Andrew. After he had preached the Gospel and planted the Church in several places in Scythia, and converted many to the Faith, he came at last to Patræ, in Achaia; and there, while endeavoring to preserve some of his converts from relapsing into their former idolatry, and daring boldly to rebuke vice, though armed with authority, he incurred the deadly hatred of Ægeas, the proconsul of Achaia. This idolatrous governor became at length so enraged against him, that he commanded him first to be scourged, and then to be crucified; and that his death might be the more lingering, he was fastened to the cross with cords instead of nails. It is reported of him, as of his brother St. Peter, that he was unwilling to have so great an honor placed upon him, as to resemble his Divine Master in the mode of his death; and therefore, when he was sentenced to be crucified, St. Andrew, as a favor, was permitted to choose that form of cross which bears his name.

As he was led to the place of execution, he exhibited the utmost serenity and composure of mind; and when he came in sight of the cross, on which he was about to be stretched, he is said to have saluted it with this affecting address: "Long have I expected and

S T. A N D R E W.

desired this happy hour ! Welcome, O cross, on which I am about to be lifted up, for the sake of that Gospel, which He, who died on thee for the sins of the world, left as an invaluable legacy ! I come to thee with joy and triumph, entreating thee to receive me as a disciple and follower of Him, who offered Himself upon thee as an all-sufficient Sacrifice and Propitiation for us. Thou wert eminently consecrated, by bearing the Body of Christ ; and wert more adorned with His limbs, than if thou hadst been inlaid with pearls. Thou hast long been expected by me ! Thou didst receive my Lord and Saviour before me ! To thee I have long looked forward with impatience ; and now rejoice that I am arrived at thee ! O ! be thou the means of conveying me safe to my Blessed Master ; who, not long since was fastened on thee, that He might impart eternal Redemption to all mankind." To this cross he remained bound with cords for more than forty-eight hours ; during all which time he continued earnestly to teach and exhort the people that they should continue steadfast in the Faith which he had delivered to them. We are told that great importunities were made with the proconsul to spare his life ; while he himself earnestly entreated that they might be of no avail, and prayed to his Lord and Master that he might be permitted at that time to depart, and seal the truth of Religion with his blood. And his prayer was granted ; after two days lingering upon the cross, the soul of the Martyr-Apostle was dismissed to the society of his brethren, who, having drunk of the Master's cup, and been baptized unto death with Jesus Christ, had been permitted to "enter into their rest," and to drink "of the river that makes glad the City of God."

We are further informed by St. Jerome, that after the body of St. Andrew was taken down from the cross, it was embalmed, after the manner of the Jews, "and decently and honorably interred by Maxi-

ST. ANDREW.

milla, a lady of great quality and estate." Afterwards, it was removed to Constantinople, by the emperor Constantine, and buried in the great church which he had built in honor of the Holy Apostles.

Although little is said of St. Andrew in Holy Scripture, yet "that little points him out as one of the saints, who shall sparkle as bright gems in the crown of the Redeemer; one of those, who shall shine as the stars for ever and ever." St. Andrew was the first convert among the Apostles; he was especially in our Lord's confidence; twice he is described as bringing others to Jesus; and yet concerning him history is comparatively silent, while a place of high dignity, and a name of high renown, have been conferred upon his brother Simon, whom he was the means of bringing to the knowledge of his Saviour. And this, at least, it may teach us; that we ourselves also may be faithful servants of God; most useful in our generation, and of much service to the souls of others, and yet be little known beyond our own little sphere, and little honored by the world at large.* And we may learn also, to be content with our station, however lowly or unobserved it may be; to feel sure that there is no employment so humble that in it we cannot serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear; and no station so high that its worldly greatness can compensate for the absence of spiritual excellence, and modest unobtrusive zeal in the cause of Christ and His Church. Those that be our fellows may know but little of our sacrifices for His sake; but He who seeth in secret will reward us openly. If we ourselves are faithful to the grace which is imparted to us through the Divine Ordinances which He hath appointed, then, for His sake, all our sacrifices and all our sufferings will be sanctified; every thorn in our crown of humiliation and distress will yield a fragrant wreath to our crown of glory and

* Watson's Sunday Evenings at Home.

S T. A N D R E W.

reward ; and each of us, in his measure, shall taste of the cup of Salvation, in the mansions of the redeemed.

Who art thou, that would'st thy name
Grave deeply in thy brother's heart ?
Look on this Saint, and learn to frame
Thy love-charm with true Christian art.
First seek thy Saviour out, and dwell
Beneath the shadow of His roof,
Till thou have scanned His features well,
And known Him for The Christ by proof ;
Such proof as they are sure to find,
Who spend with Him their happy days,
Clean hands, and a self-ruling mind
Ever in tune for love and praise.
Then, potent with the spell of Heaven,
Go, and thine erring brother gain,
Entice him home to be forgiven,
Till he, too, see his Saviour plain.
That so, before the judgment seat,
Though changed and glorified each face,
Not unremembered ye may meet
For endless ages to embrace.*

* Christian Year.



ST. STEPHEN,

The Protomartyr.

BY THE RIGHT REV. AUBREY G. SPENCER, D. D.,

LORD BISHOP OF JAMAICA.

AT that early period of the history of the Christian Church when the apostles, in pursuance of their divine commission, were beginning, after the ascension of their crucified Lord, to re-collect the scattered members of which it was composed, and when the accession of three thousand souls by baptism on the preaching of St. Peter probably constituted the numerical majority of the faithful who had provoked the bitter persecution of an enormous multitude in ignorance of God, it is related that "all who believed were together, and had all things common, having sold their possessions and goods for the purpose of imparting to all men as every one had need." But this voluntary community of property, consequent on the peculiar circumstances of the primitive society of Christians, was under the administration of the apostles, and subject to the regularity and order which prevailed in every apostolic institution.

Some dispute, however, between the Grecian and the Hebrew converts respecting an alleged neglect of the widows of the former in the dispensing of the daily charity, led to the ordination of the

S T. S T E P H E N.

Diaconate, of which Stephen, who is first mentioned in the sacred narrative on this occasion, as being possessed of an extraordinary measure of "faith and of the Holy Ghost," was the foremost and most celebrated minister. The *peculiar* duties of the Diaconate (of which the theory at least is preserved in the present ordinal of the Church) were to assist and relieve the apostles in certain inferior occupations; "the serving of tables," the administering of the common funds, and the dispensing of alms to the sick and needy, the widows and orphans who either belonged to, or supplicated the charities of, the Church. The duties common to all the ministers of that church appear to have been the offices of prayer, the administration of the sacrament of baptism, the catechising of proselytes, and the general preaching or proclaiming of the Gospel of God. The qualifications for the Diaconate are clearly stated by the Evangelist as consisting in approved character—"honest report, a fulness of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom," and a consequent aptitude for the work to which they were called. The original designation of the candidates was undoubtedly with the laity; while the confirming and ordaining of the persons elected were vested in the apostles alone, who, when satisfied of their credentials and fitness, "laid their hands on them," commissioning them in the name of their Great Master to "cease not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ" wheresoever they might be sent.

From the period of the ordination of the seven Deacons to the martyrdom of St. Stephen, the time was probably short; but it was certainly long enough to witness the extensive growth of Christianity in numerous conversions to the Church in Jerusalem, where "Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people," and won from the priesthood itself "a great company to the obedience of the faith."

The denunciations of the uncompromising preacher against sin

ST. STEPHEN.

and idolatry,—his full but fearless assertion of the true character of the Redeemer, in opposition to the prevailing fiction of a Messiah who was yet to come, soon raised up against him a multitude of enemies who had no difficulty in suborning false witnesses to subserve their wicked purpose, and to bring the first of the holy army of Martyrs to the awful but triumphant termination of his mortal history.

They, who had been the “betrayers and murderers of the Just One,” were not likely to abstain from a similar persecution of any one who should be bold enough to upbraid them with their guilt, and testify to the innocence and truthfulness of their victim. But the work of God’s servant needed this fearful consummation. The blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church; and amid the spread of the Gospel and the multiplication of its converts, the best and purest preachers of the truth were arraigned before the infidel; and in many successive ages, supported like St. Stephen by the power of faith, by the vision of the opened heavens, and Christ standing at the right hand of God, have borne the agonies of a cruel death—while they

Prayed of their Saviour God, in life’s last throes,
Grace for themselves, and pardon for their foes.

Animated by the same faith and encouraged by the great examples of those that have gone before them, may the disciples of the blessed Jesus, and the saints of His Church be always ready in these days of rebuke and blasphemy to endure “the shame of the Cross,” the relinquishment of the goods of this world, and every other trial that the faithful profession of the Gospel and an adherence to the Church that imparts it may imply. If they may not realize with their corporeal eyes the glory of God, and the heavenly Hierarchy

S T. S T E P H E N .

by whom the Great Head of the Church is surrounded in His eternal Kingdom, they may yet acquire a sufficient hold of the "evidence of things not seen," to enable them to struggle through life, and to trust at the end of it, to the certainty of that crown of righteousness which awaits them at the day of consummation.

I ask not, God, those visions bright
Which cheer'd thy primal martyr's way,
When burst upon his ravished sight
The open'd heaven's supernal light,
As on the judgment day;
When on his tranç'd, uplifted mind,
The ascended God in glory shin'd,
And far beyond the murderous doom
Recalled his deathless spirit home.

I ask not, that these feeble eyes,
The mystic Minister should see,
Who, vestur'd in the rainbow's dyes,
Remov'd the mantle from the skies
That veiled Eternity;
When o'er the shrinking world amaz'd,
The terrors of his hand he rais'd,
And told, amid the thunder's roar,
Of earth dissolv'd, and time no more.

Yet, ere I pass the Jordan stream
That parts Eternity from time,
I crave, oh God, one little beam
To give me but a transient gleam
Of that immortal clime,
Where peace pervades the halcyon bowers,
Where love informs the happy hours,

S T. S T E P H E N.

And all that's bright, and wise, and good,
Is seen, and felt, and understood.

Oh, ere these straining eyelids close
On things that make the world too dear,
On friends whom Thine own grace bestows,
On one, whose love-lit eye still glows
 Beneath the falling tear ;
Fain would I climb to Pisgah's mound,
And see the land that lies beyond
The Canaan which my faith believes,
The Eden which my Saviour gives.

Yes—if this dim and failing sense
May not within the veil intrude,
Supply me with that faith intense
Which lifts the aspiring spirit hence
 To mansions of the good ;
And grant me while my course is run
Thy vision'd truth to lead me on,
Till by the path of suffering trod
I reach the City of my God.



ST. THOMAS.

BY THE REV. A. W. VINTON, D. D.

AMONG the first disciples of our Lord, we observe the same diversities of character, as with the Christians of our own time. Although born of one nation, belonging to the same social class, trained to similar habits, and more than this, converted by the one power of Divine grace, yet in them we readily detect the constitutional peculiarities which gave to each one his distinguishing trait. Nature never exactly repeats herself, and that which makes the individuality of each man's character is never displaced, not even by Divine grace.

Religion only sanctifies the character that already is, quickening the powers, elevating the affections, exalting the aims of life, but leaving the natural temperament still as the mould of the character, with all the prominences, all the defects that belong to its native constitution. The ardent temper of business will be the ardent temper of religion. The meditative philosopher will be a meditative Christian, and each man's piety will borrow its peculiar complexion from the disposition with which he was born. Hence results that endless diversity of Christian character which is continually interesting us by its novelty, and striking us with admiration at the power of

ST. THOMAS.

Divine grace that can unite such different natures in one bond of holiness and one destiny of salvation.

It is this diversity which renders the characters of the twelve disciples so natural, and throws an air of truthfulness over the narrative of the Evangelists. In the doings and sayings of those first Christians, we behold the actings out of several varieties of temper and disposition, which depict to our minds better than biography could do the peculiar character of each. We see them under the same circumstances, displaying their different tempers, each in his own peculiar way. Peter is sanguine and headstrong; John is tender and confiding; Philip is inapt at spiritual apprehension, and Thomas is cautious, skeptical, and not without a sort of roughness that might seem to render him less amiable than the others. It is of this latter person that we are now particularly to speak. In characterizing this disciple, it might be said that he resembled that class of persons whose minds are, if I may speak so, sensuous. His mind, that is, had a greater affinity for facts than for principles; or, at least, it would relish only those principles which are drawn directly from facts. His mental tastes would be rather for science than for philosophy. He would scruple all evidence that was drawn from the province of mere reason. To mount up into the region of generalization and abstraction, would be to such a mind an effort so difficult as to be always reluctant and rare. Refinement of conception would therefore be to it almost an impossibility. Spirituality would be an almost unmeaning word, and the walk of faith would be like a constant toiling upwards. Such would seem to have been the temper of this disciple. His love for his Master was unquestionable, but it was rather the attachment of personal friendship than the deep reverential affection of one who entered into the full conception of the Saviour's character, and loved him for the refined and holy excellencies of his

ST. THOMAS.

heavenly mind. The deep devotion, the patient, childlike trust with which Jesus walked with God, must have revealed a pitch of character and sentiment, which Thomas could but imperfectly apprehend. We have an illustration of both the strength of his regard and the slowness of his faith on an occasion when another person might not have specially exhibited either. When Jesus was called to Bethany to visit the family of Lazarus, Thomas, knowing the danger to which his Master was exposed from the Jews, had, with the other disciples, warned him of the peril. Without faith enough in his Master to believe that he could forefend the danger, to his plain mind it seemed to be an unreasonable venture, and he did not doubt that its issue would be death. Yet with an honest and manly but rude expression of friendship, he said to the other disciples, "Let us also go that we may die with him." His affection therefore was sound, but his reverence was not devout, nor his manner refined.

On another occasion were betrayed both the imperfection of his faith and his want of spiritual apprehension. Jesus had forewarned the disciples of his departure from the world. He had promised to prepare a place for them in his Father's house, and added, "Whither I go, ye know, and the way ye know." Thomas, as if at an utter loss to comprehend his Master's meaning, replied, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?"

But a yet more striking exhibition of the same characteristics is found in one of the most remarkable incidents of the whole evangelical story. The Saviour had once, after his resurrection, appeared to his disciples while they were gathered together in secret meeting. From this meeting Thomas had been absent. Whether his faith in Jesus had been shaken by the forlorn issue to which his Master's cause had seemed to come, or whether his spirit were drawn away after secular things, or whatever the cause, we are not informed. But

ST. THOMAS.

he was not entirely estranged from his old companions, for he came among them again, and then was told of the precious visit and the sweet benediction of the Lord. But Thomas was entirely incredulous. He replied, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." This would have been indeed the "experiment of the cross," and the declaration exhibits very strongly the dogmatic and yet skeptical temper of the man. I say, both dogmatic and skeptical, for the two qualities are far from being incompatible. No man dogmatizes so imperiously as the unbeliever, and a skeptic is always the greatest bigot. In this demand to see the Lord, and to be convinced by tangible evidence that it was he, we discover the workings of a mind whose associations of thought were plain and almost coarse. Speaking out in unpolished manner and tone, he betrays the grossness of his conceptions, and shows how hard it is for a nature whose tendencies are material to entertain the idea of the supernatural. Yet beneath this overlying materialism there was a solid basis of honest practical love for his Lord, and Jesus honored the affection of his disciple so far as to yield to his demand. When the disciples were again gathered on the following Lord's day, and Thomas was himself with them, Jesus again appeared, and after the first salutation, "Peace be with you," he addressed himself directly to Thomas, and said, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing." This tangible proof was enough. His harsh incredulity was overcome. He saw that here was a supernatural work transcending all his former conceptions, and this practical proof even the dulness of his practical spirit could not resist. He cried in amazed and reverent conviction, "My Lord and my God." To this unprompted utterance of his faith, Jesus responded in words which were both an

ST. THOMAS.

encouragement and a rebuke : "Thomas, because thou hast seen, thou hast believed. Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

It is to the honor of this chosen servant of Christ, that his convictions though slow were firm. We have no account of any subsequent defection from the faith. He bore the duties and the dignities of the Apostolic office, and became one of the founders of that universal church which is built upon the Apostles and Prophets, and of which Jesus Christ is himself the corner stone.

History reports that St. Thomas became a missionary, and lived and died in Asia; and our modern days have brought to light a signal proof of his fidelity and success in the well-known instance of the Syriac church on the coast of Malabar, which inherits the tradition that it was founded by this Apostle, and bears the title of the Christians of St. Thomas.

It is interesting, by means of evidence so well authenticated as Dr. Buchanan has shown this to be, to connect our own period with that of the Apostles, and to behold thereby a sort of living voucher for the fidelity of this Apostolic man. For by it, he being dead, yet speaketh, and attests the firmness of his subsequent belief in a way that is without parallel in the history of Christianity.

Having reviewed the few incidents which illustrate the character of this Apostle, let us turn to consider the striking declaration of the Saviour, which, as it is constantly associated in our minds with his name, may be regarded as the moral of the story of St. Thomas. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." These words plainly show, that while the Saviour condescended to gratify the peculiar disposition of his disciple, he would yet have preferred to see a different one. He draws a comparison between the temper of mind which will rest its faith on nothing but ocular demonstration or

upon its own ideas of reasonableness, with that disposition which can believe without exacting so much. He evidently prefers a temper of reliance and faith to that questioning spirit which goes no farther than it can see, and no faster than it can feel its way.

The superiority which is thus ascribed to the believing temper over the skeptical, may be regarded as a superiority which is mental, moral, and practical. In the first place, we may say of such a temper, that it is blessed because it is in its character most nearly allied to a high development of reason.

The mental character of infidelity is essentially narrow. It objects to divine things because they are not seen. It demurs to miracles because they are new. It disputes all supernatural evidence simply because it is not natural. It disbelieves the momentous future of religion because it is unlike the past experience of man. It is quite evident that such objections proceed upon the implied supposition that the present system of the world is perfect, our knowledge of it complete, our condition in it final. Infidelity erects our present fragmentary knowledge as the standard of judgment. It supposes that man, and not only mankind at large, the world of men, but that any one man has enough of information, and strength of reason enough to determine the probability of a question which lies altogether out of the present sphere of things, embosomed in the deep darkness of an unknown existence. Its reasoning leaves out this prime element of truth, viz., that there is at the head of the universe an omnipotent and omniscient Governor, whose ways are not as our ways. It shows that the unbeliever has not advanced so far in knowledge as to know where its limits lie, and fancying that the world is all before his eye, and that all truth is measurable by his unaided faculties, he commits a blunder so radical as to be fatal to all hope of wisdom.

The intellectual character of faith is the opposite of this. So far

from presuming on its present knowledge, as if that knowledge were the sum or even the basis of all truth, it takes its ignorance as a first principle. It begins with the axiom that God is unfathomable truth, as well as immeasurable power. It supposes a realm of infinitude, into which the eye never penetrated. Divine laws, counsels, plans, which beggar and belittle our human powers, a world-wide depth of certainty and knowledge and wisdom in which our poor minds founder and are broken to pieces.

Now this first principle of faith is the last conclusion of the ripest human science. The finished wisdom of Sir Isaac Newton made him seem to himself to be but a spectator standing on the margin of the great ocean of truth, and gathering pebbles on its shore. And this crowning wisdom of science is only the alphabet of faith. In its conscious ignorance and imbecility, it seeks for a teaching which the world cannot give. It asks for helps that man cannot invent. It looks abroad and above into the boundless expanse of the Divine nature for instruction that it feels must come from Heaven. It sits at the feet of inspiration, and cries, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

But this ignorance of faith has an advantage over the ignorance of philosophy in this respect. For, while a converted philosophy, driven unwillingly to confess its ignorance, would still look for Divine revelations in its old accustomed methods, and according to the laws which have guided its former investigations, and thus carrying its prejudices and narrowmindedness into religion itself, would find a puzzling strangeness in every new truth; faith, always conscious of its ignorance of former acquisitions, prejudges nothing, acts freely and at ease in learning divine things, receives them cordially, with thirst, and enters into their deep meaning with an insight all the more penetrating because it has nothing to unlearn. Nothing would

seem strange to it. And not only so, but by learning divine things so readily, it would almost seem to forecast the future revelations of Heaven, and carry on the analogy of things already revealed as a clue to guide the soul through the labyrinth of possible truth. So that it might thus be endued with a sort of prophetic power, the rays of divine intelligence shed into the windows of the soul opened by faith, the extension of God's mind to man's by the chain of inspired probabilities.

Is it not plain, then, that if we compare the intellectual character of faith with that skeptical habit of mind which is loth to receive what it has not experienced, it towers away in superiority, and that it is more blessed to be willing to believe without seeing than to see and then believe?

Again; if we consider faith as a moral disposition, we can see why the Saviour should pronounce it more blessed than its opposite. The moral character of skepticism is *pride*; of faith, *humility*. The former is full of the spirit of self-reliance; the latter depends upon God. Even before any revelations have been made to the heart, and before there is any settled conviction of divine doctrines, there is a disposition favorable or unfavorable to the reception of religious truth. There is a confidence in God, a sense of weakness and unworthiness, which, besides constituting a teachable temper, have a moral character which is entirely german to religion, which is indeed the basis of piety. But while the skeptical temper believes, there is a want of affinity for God, an absence of that free and generous trust which denotes the filial character, a suspiciousness always cold and ungenial, which leads to estrangement if there has once been friendship, and freezes into alienation if there has not. Now such a heart is not the place where the tender, heaven-born affections find their home, and nestle and brood like a dove. It is the natural resting-

place of malignant emotions, a cage of unclean birds, and a den of scorpions. There is wrapped up in it all potential evil.

But the disposition of faith, the trustful, willing, obedient temper, shaping itself beforehand to welcome whatever God shall be pleased to reveal; embracing it unhesitatingly when it comes, holding that revelation precious, making it as eyes to the mind and food and strength to the soul—such a disposition attempered and configured to divine things, how different its moral character! It is the germ of all holiness. For the disposition which embraces is the same as obeys the truth. There is already in that state of mind a predisposition to be conformed to God, in which consists the perfection of moral excellence. So that again, when we regard faith as a *moral* quality, we can understand why he is more blessed who believes without seeing than he who must first see in order to believe.

And yet again; we witness the practical superiority of this disposition in its effects in imparting comfort to the soul. The coldness of too much caution in religion, is a cheerless thing. The narrowness in which the incredulous spirit shuts itself up, repels all sympathy and shuts in all tenderness. As it relies upon itself it must find its comfort in itself. In its afflictions it draws back from God, unless the affliction be so overwhelming as to unman the soul, and drive it from its consistency of depravity, and crush the very skepticism out of the bruised and broken heart, and so force it to trust in God. In desertion it only makes the spirit more lonely, unless its desolateness be so intolerable that the craving affections reach out to the other world for a companionship, which is denied them in this. In any manner of distress, the coldheartedness of doubting is refused all consolation, and has nothing to comfort it but its very coldness, benumbing the power of feeling.

Upon such a character God never smiles till it is converted. Into

that heart, Heaven sheds no benediction. Life and joy and salvation are alike shut out from it. It is a wretched as well as a bad thing.

But with the faithful temper, the whole condition of affairs is reversed. It is ready to believe without seeing and feeling, and therefore it does not need the stroke of suffering to chastise it into filial trust. It is warm and genial, and therefore it invites all sympathy from men and fellowship from God. It is confiding and humble, and therefore when affliction comes it bends without being broken. If the bosom be bereaved, the heavenward instinct of faith leads up the soul to rest in the bosom of God. If it be forsaken by human friends, it trusts rejoicingly in the love of an unseen friend who "sticketh closer than a brother." There is no sad loneliness to a heart which is ready to receive all things, and believe all things as from God. Meditation is sweet to the confiding who believes without seeing, and social life is made sweeter to the faithful, whose heart is conformed to the Divine will beforehand, without knowing what that life may be; and life and death are alike peaceful to that filial temper whose highest joy is submission to God. Upon such a spirit there distils from the oozing heavens a constant sweet dew of blessing. God loves it, it is so much like himself. He rejoices in it for its prospective sure felicity. He honors and rewards it by making new and nobler communications of grace. He feeds it with sweeter and richer truth as its appetite is greater; and in every way more blessed are they who have the prepared heart of faith, and are ready to believe before they have seen.

But let us mark the distinction which God has conferred upon this disposition, by making it the instrument of justification through Jesus Christ.

There are other Christian graces no less indispensable to our salvation, but none so radical as faith. No other feeling or exercise could,

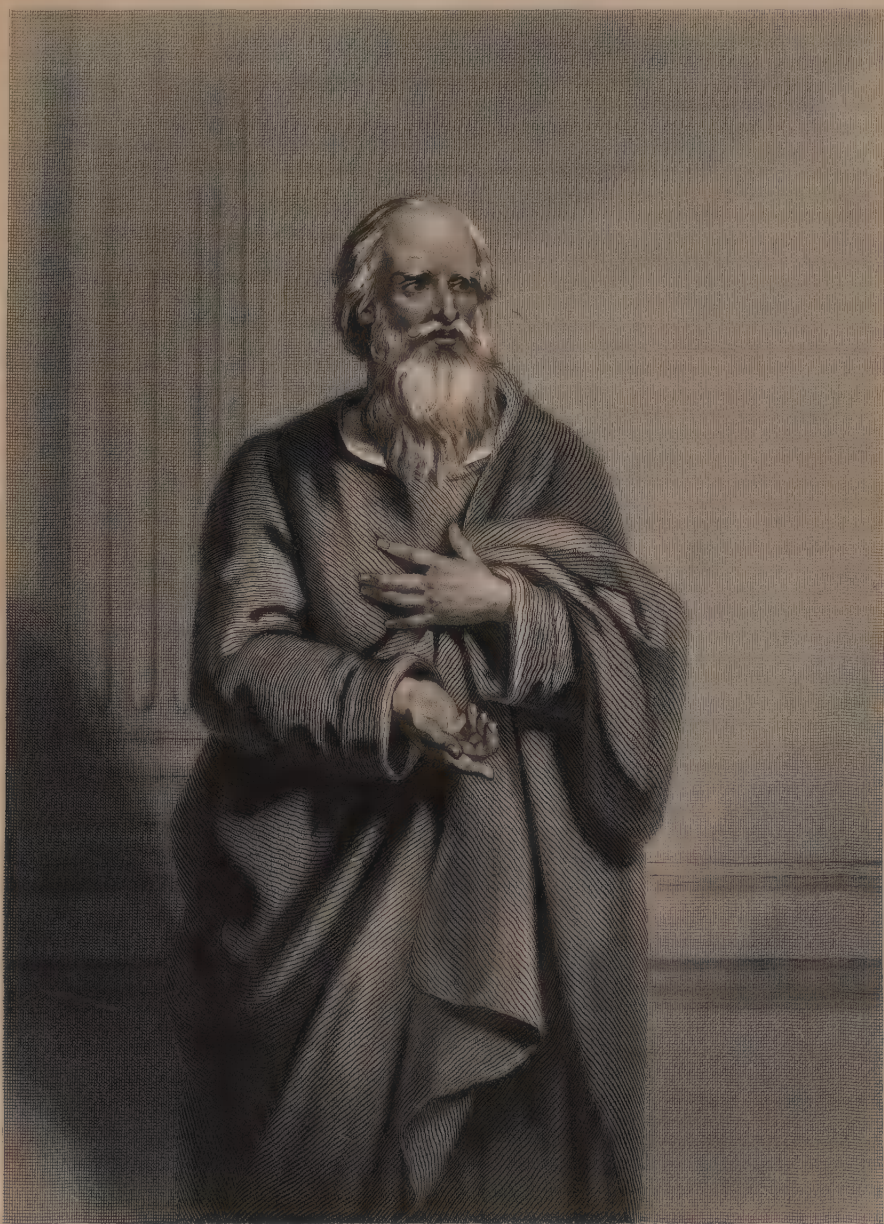
in the nature of things, supply the want of this. "It is the very hand," say the Homilies of the church, "which puts on Christ." The great mystery of the atonement, at which the skeptical spirit halts, and cries out, "How can these things be?" is a plain path to the spirit of faith. It asks not "how?" It pauses not to survey and criticise. It is enough to know that it is. It is written; sealed by God. There need not be a new crucifixion. It does not demand to put its fingers into the prints of the nails, and thrust its hand into the wounded side. It learns that there were once such wounds; that blood once flowed for sin from the living heart of God's incarnate Son; that Heaven accepted the sacrifice, and that the blood-bought soul is invited to be saved; and not seeing, it believes; not seeing, yet believing, it loves and rejoices.

Faith, the germinant principle of all Christian excellence, becomes thus our salvation. On this pivot hinges our eternity. By this lever we heave off the mountain load of our sins into the mighty depth of God's ocean love, where they are buried out of sight and remembrance for evermore. By this attraction we are drawn to the great centre of love, the bosom of God. By this telescopic grace, we bring another world into the midst of this. We feel its influences, rejoice in hope of its glory, and realize a heaven upon earth. By this light we walk, seeing him who is invisible, looking unto Jesus, waiting for his advent, and the victory of faith over death and sin.

Why should not the chilled and shivering heart of skepticism be warmed into holy trust in Christ? Let the short-sighted man, who holds up his lantern to illuminate the resplendent pages of God's word, remove the dusky shadow of his reason from that revelation of light; let the truth flash into his unscreened eye; let him bow down like Saul of Tarsus before the light of Jesus, and cry out in the wailing of a new-born faith, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

S T. T H O M A S

God has, indeed, in the instances both of Saul and of Thomas, converted and saved the men who would not believe without the sight. But in each case his mercy was pointed with a rebuke, and this alone should convince him that mercy to such is not Heaven's frequent method. He may scruple the terms of salvation. He may poise himself upon the uncertainty of one who professes to be an inquirer, waiting for more light. He may withhold his faith until Christ shall manifest himself to him as he does not unto the world, and think he shall be saved at last. But salvation is fixed on terms that are everlasting, notwithstanding his scruples. His laggard faith, waiting for the convincing manifestation of Christ, may detain him from salvation till he falls into the grave. And even if these were to be realized to a cavilling demand, how much nobler, better, happier, is the simplicity of faith. Even if Christ should manifest his grace to him, it would be attended with a reproof. The remembrance of such a conversion would bring a blush to his cheeks to think how unworthy were his doubts. And in all his after enjoyment, when he dwelt upon the assurance of his pardon, his ears would seem to tingle with the haunting echo of his Saviour's reprimand: "Because thou hast seen, thou hast believed; blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed."



John Wood

C. Ross

St. Benedict

ST. BARNABAS.

BY THE REV. JOHN O. CHOULES, D. D.

THE Acts of the Apostles form an appendix to the gospel history. Just in proportion as we feel interested in the narrative of the incarnation, sufferings, and death of the man of Calvary, shall we desire to trace the history of his chosen heralds, after his departure from the world. How did they sustain his cause—how did they bear up under the reproach of the cross which he endured? Did they retire to their domestic circles in shame and disappointment? Or did they face all danger, defy opposition, yield obedience to the mandate of their ascended Lord, and go forth with the watchword—“the world for the Son of God?”

All that is important for us to know, is detailed in the Acts of the Apostles. In the pages of this unrivalled history of the early Church we see the “glorious company of the apostles,” whose labors revolutionized the world and brought its nations to embrace the faith of the Crucified One. Nothing can be more obvious than that the volume of revelation was intended rather for our instruction, than the gratification of a vain and insatiable curiosity.

Paul and Peter, the great heralds of the cross and chief ministers

S T. B A R N A B A S .

of the truth, are set forth in all their painful labors, life-long sufferings, and cruel martyrdom; while others of the apostolic band are only mentioned in a more general manner. Thus of St. Barnabas very little is recorded that is not connected with the apostleship of St. Paul. The earliest mention of him is in the fourth chapter of the Acts, and there he is introduced as one of those generous-hearted Christians who sold their lands to aid in the support of their necessitous brethren. He comes before us with circumstances of peculiar honor, and at once bespeaks our admiration of his character.

The Jewish name of the apostle was Joses, in the Syriac rendered Joseph; but though a Levite, he was of a family that had removed to Cyprus, where many Jews had emigrated to escape the persecutions of their race. It is probable that his landed estate was situated in Judea, for he disposed of it with ease, and laid the price of his possessions at the apostles' feet. Some of the early fathers imagined that his generous conduct induced his brethren to call him "Son of Consolation;" but he had before been called Barnabas, which in Hebrew signifies the son of preaching, or prophecy. The infinite wisdom of God is always seen in the selection of materials for the erection of the Christian church; and though not many great, not many rich, not many noble are called, yet some in every age have been made willing in the day of Divine power, and the exalted Saviour looks down from his throne upon many who have repaired to his mercy-seat, and who could say of much of this world's good's, and earthly honor, and intellectual glory, as they sacrificed it at his feet—"it is a gift!" God saw fit that one of His earliest evangelists should possess a worldly estate, and have a disposition to part with it too, for the sake of Christ's cause, that He might furnish the world with an attractive example of Christian benevolence. Great was the honor conferred upon this good man when the Holy Ghost said, "Separate to me

S T. B A R N A B A S.

Barnabas and Saul to the work to which I have called them." Their mission was to the native isle of Barnabas, Cyprus, a large island in the Mediterranean Sea, with a population of nearly two millions of inhabitants. The place was famous for corn, and infamous for the worship of Venus. From this time he stands associated with Paul, and the history of the apostle of the Gentiles necessarily includes that of Barnabas.

We are taught by the example of these eminent servants of Jesus Christ, that the best men in the purest age of the Church were imperfect, and that differences of opinion upon religious subjects may exist among true ministers of the Saviour. Paul and Barnabas fell out by the way. The subject which elicited this difference of opinion was a matter of small moment. The fathers of the Church say that Paul argued for what was *just*, and Barnabas contended for what was *kind*. How delightful it is to know that this painful interruption of Christian effort and affection, was overruled by a wonder-working God to the furtherance of the Gospel—so even now Jehovah causes the wrath of man to praise Him, and then exhibits His own omnipotency by restraining the residue. After his separation from Paul we find that Barnabas, with Mark his nephew, sailed to Cyprus; but we hear nothing of his future labors, or the events of his ministry, and the time and place and manner of his death are to us unknown. But God's word tells us that "Barnabas was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." There is a day approaching when this faithful servant shall be made known to the Church Universal; and shall receive his crown from that Saviour, whom not having seen he loved, and whose truth he preached.



W. H. Woodcut

W. H. Woodcut

S T. S I M E O N.

BY THE REV. MILO MAHAN.

THE history of God's elect is often like the poet's description of a hidden stream. Flowing on, in a way that escapes the careless eye, it reveals itself to the faithful by occasional glimpses of fresher and more delicate verdure. Even when the stream of life is entirely underground, when it is lost as completely to the view as rivers swallowed up in the desert, there are still a few islands in the waste, a few quiet scenes, of lone but majestic beauty, which betray the secret of its course, and announce its approaches to the surface.

This is beautifully exemplified in the brief records of those two portions of sacred history, which mark respectively the end of the old miraculous dispensation, and the beginning of the new.

Thus, in the times so faithfully depicted by the prophet Malachi, we can discern, even in that favored nation which was emphatically "a garden of the Lord," hardly more than a wilderness. A priesthood corrupt, effeminate, and neglectful of their duties; a people profane and reckless; the solemn service of the sanctuary become "a weariness;" the requirements of justice between man and man made a theme of mockery; God himself "robbed," His "table polluted,"

S T. S I M E O N .

and His name blasphemed through the slackness of the people in rendering their customary dues, and still more, through the mercenary connivance of the priests ; in all these things we have such a picture of frivolity, and heartless levity of national character, as is worse on the whole than downright infidelity. For rocks may be rent by the word of truth, and mountains may be levelled, but what shall impress the barren and shifting sands ?

Yet, even in this low state of religious decline, and national degeneracy, we may discover some semblance of better and more fruitful times. There are at least intimations that the "rivers of waters," though hidden from view, are not quite swallowed up. Thus, we read among the last sad records of the Old Testament, "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another : and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and thought upon His name. *And they shall be mine*, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day, when I make up my jewels."

After this period years roll away with hardly a trace of goodness in the character of the Jews ; at all events without a record worthy of being preserved among the sacred oracles. The decline, so marked in the days of Malachi, has been going on with nothing to arrest it. The national character has become a jest even to Roman prefects and proconsuls. Yet, in these sad times again, if we consider thoughtfully the scant records that remain, we shall still find some few islands in the desert ; a few green spots to cheer the weary traveller ; a few "jewels," to be set in the crown of that Prince of Life, who is silently preparing His coming. A fisherman, or two, among the thousands who cast their nets into the waves of Galilee ; a devout old priest, blameless in morals, and scrupulous to maintain amid general neglect the clock-work regularity of the daily worship of the Temple ; a holy

S T. S I M E O N .

Virgin, in devout simplicity gliding through this world so as hardly to seem to touch it; an aged female devotee, spending a long life of widowhood in the quiet shades of the Temple; a pious old prophet (a last remnant it may be of the Nazarites, or of the schools of the prophets), who thought it no shame in a bustling age to love the cloistered courts of the house of God, and to work for the truth by *watching*; with these, and with such like characters, the sacred narrative recommences its flow in the beginning of the gospels; as if to show, that the Tree of Life still bears its "twelve manner of fruits;" that even in the worst of times the Rivers of Grace, though hidden, are never lost, but flow on still in a stream of health under ground.

In other words, "the jewels," which we find to cheer the sight amid the degeneracy described at the close of the Canon of the Old Testament, we still find bright as ever, or perhaps still brighter, in the sadder degeneracy that marks the beginning of the New.

The aged SIMEON, one of the chosen few, whose names were worthy to be enrolled in that "book of remembrance" which God caused to be written at the dawn of Christianity, was eminently a *watcher* on the heights of Zion. Through a life, prolonged, we have reason to believe, beyond the ordinary term of human existence, he stood almost entirely alone. Like the faithful sentinel, so admirably introduced by the Greek poet in the beginning of his Agamemnon, he was content to stand night after night on the battlements under the cold canopy of heaven, mindful only of that slow-coming beacon fire which his inward eye saw, when all others but he had well-nigh ceased to expect it. For this he waited. For this his anxious eyes looked out. Unmindful of the din and bustle of the busy world below, caring little for the eating and drinking, the feasting and dancing, the marrying and giving in marriage, which absorb the faculties of the more "practical" mass of mankind, he deemed it enough for one old man to *wait*. A

ST. SIMEON.

slow and heavy business, to be sure, ill calculated to quicken the pulses of the blood, or to win applause, yet in the spiritual warfare (as in all others) a needful trade, and one not unrewarded by the General. For while the eyes of the crowd are taken up with those who are abroad and doing, one Eye at least is fixed on the lonely and unlaurelled watchman; and when the time comes, his "patience of hope" will also have its reward. At all events, Simeon was content to stand alone. Satisfied, no doubt, with that "secret of the Lord" which is most abundantly vouchsafed to those who seek it in secret, he had no time to care what other men thought, or said, or did. He watched and prayed, and looked eagerly into a future, illumined by the star of hope. This, so far as we can learn, was his sole and sufficient occupation. He found in it employment enough even for his large soul. At least, we may be sure, he found comfort in it; for it had been revealed to him by the Spirit (whether miraculously through dreams and oracles, or naturally through that keenness of spiritual vision which faithful *watching* imparts), that he should not taste of death until he had seen the Lord's Christ.

In a life like this there is of course scant material for story. So silently do the hours glide along; so calm and uneventful is the tenor of each day; so like is month to month, and year to year, that the Muse of history falls asleep, and her pen drops lifeless from her hand. While warriors fill volumes with their deeds, and poets and statesmen, and even scholars give employment to armies of scribes, the life of a saint like Simeon may often be dispatched as summarily as the history of a grain of corn. "First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear," is an ample enough record of a life that, starting from earth, wins heaven. Not of course, that there is any lack of progress in a life like this, or of action in the true sense of the word, or of works accomplished, or victories achieved. The defect is rather

ST. SIMEON.

in our want of ability to note the progress. For much as we delight in life and motion, we seldom notice either, unless marked by the rattling of wheels.

In Simeon's case, however, there was this special exception, that his life was distinguished by one event, upon which even history may pause to dwell. He wrote no books—he did no deeds of the kind which common books are stuffed with—but *he waited for the Lord's Christ, and was privileged to behold Him*. He saw Him *now*, and *near at hand*, whom Balaam had beheld in the distant future. He saw Him whom prophets and kings had long desired to see, but could not see Him. Not indeed in noonday splendor as “the Sun of Righteousness;” not in the full-orbed glory of the prophetic, regal, and sacerdotal majesty; not with that blaze of evidence and demonstration of spiritual power, by which subsequently God was made manifest in flesh; but in milder radiance he beheld Him, as “the root and the offspring of David, and the *bright and Morning Star*.” This, however, was enough for the faithful watchman. To eyes that are accustomed to look out by night, the faintest glimpse of day is sufficient. While ordinary men require finger-posts and written directions to guide them, the keen-eyed wanderer in the desert finds ample demonstration of his path in a stone, or a bush, or a bleaching skeleton. Of the same quick kind was the faith of Simeon. For the reward of his long vigil he was content to see One who, to ordinary minds, was only “a little child,” borne in the arms of a Virgin Mother. Yet in this “young child,” he scrupled not to see the Lord's Christ. Without a moment's hesitation, strong in faith, and staggering not in unbelief, nor despising the day of small things, he acknowledged in Him the object of his hopes, the answer to his prayers, the desire of his longing eyes. He took “the young child” in his arms. He pressed the infant Redeemer to his aged heart. He pronounced a

ST. SIMEON.

benediction upon "the womb that bare Him, and the paps that gave Him suck." He bade a final farewell to this life, to all its hopes, its trials, and its cares, in that solemn "nunc dimittis," which remains his only written record, the last and sweetest strain of the prophetic spirit of the Old Testament:

"Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace;
For mine eyes have seen Thy Salvation!"

Such was Simeon; a patient, quiet, good old man, humble and devout, who, in the midst of a nation overrun with worldliness and hypocrisy, had found out the secret of so living among things temporal as not to lose sight of the things eternal. In the simple but most expressive language of the evangelist St. Luke, "he was a man just and devout, *waiting* for the Consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him."

If Luke, "the beloved physician"—to whom we are indebted for this brief record—was also (as tradition informs us) a painter, he certainly must have delighted chiefly in pictures of serene life. There is something at all events very peculiar, we may venture to say (with reverence, however, for the inspired character of the holy narrative) something *characteristic*, in the way in which he introduces "the young child Jesus" in his opening chapters. In the gospel of St. Matthew the background is Oriental, regal, almost sombre in its stately magnificence. There is the cruel king Herod, the wailing mothers and the slaughtered innocents, the worship of prostrate magi, the hurried flight into the mystic land of the Nile. But in the gospel of St. Luke, the blameless Zacharias and Elizabeth, the devout Simeon and Anna, the simple-minded shepherds watching their flocks by night, the angels singing in mid-heaven, form together just such a

ST. SIMEON.

serene and heavenly setting as we would desire for so inimitable a picture. It is like the "apples of gold," of which Solomon speaks, "set in pictures of silver."

If the record of Simeon, occurring among these, is in itself a bare outline, yet it is an outline so illuminated by all its accompaniments, so steeped, as it were, in a sea of the mildest and most heavenly radiance, that we cannot help accounting him one of the choicest spirits of the Bible. He must ever be associated in the mind with Zacharias and Elizabeth, and Anna; with angels, and with shepherds; with Joseph and Mary, and the young child Jesus. His image, moreover, is to a singular degree divested of every thing earthly and human. He passes across the stage, like Melchizedec, without father, without mother, without beginning or end of days. He has no local habitation or name, but in the courts of the House of God. He has no peer but the aged and devoted Anna. He has no history but that one moment of rapture, worth more than ten centuries of ordinary life, in which he stood in the holy place with "the young child" Jesus in his arms. His form and his name will be treasured in those hearts only, where a niche can be found free from all common associations, bathed in a light of tempered but celestial radiance, and secured against desecration by that golden inscription,

"BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART;
FOR THEY SHALL SEE GOD."



D A V I D.

BY THE REV. ASA D. SMITH, D. D.

It was night; and the host of Israel, with Saul their king and leader, rested from the fierce and sanguinary strife with Amalek. Yet rested not the holy prophet Samuel; a fearful message from the Lord held his eyes waking. The express command of God to Saul was, as he went forth to the battle, "Utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not." A terrible retribution upon that idolatrous nation, for all their crimes indeed, but especially for lying in wait against Israel, as they came forth from the land of Egypt! The battle won, the Divine injunction was but partially fulfilled. Whether from false tenderness, or from a desire to grace his own triumph, Saul spared Agag the king; and while he destroyed "every thing that was vile and refuse," he covetously reserved "the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and all that was good." The people are spoken of as concurring with him, but he was chiefly responsible; and God saw fit to hold him to a prompt and strict account. "Then came the word of the Lord to Samuel, saying, It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my

DAVID.

commandments." Grievous was this announcement to the venerable prophet. He was concerned for God's honor, and he was tenderly concerned for Saul's welfare. He lay not his head that night upon its pillow, but prostrate before God interceded for the erring king. Unavailing, however, were even his entreaties; there could be no reversal of the Divine decree. And when, the next morning, the prophet and the monarch met, after vain efforts at self-exculpation on the part of Saul, the message from God to him by the mouth of Samuel was, "Thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel. * * The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and given it to a *neighbor of thine*, that is better than thou."

Who this "neighbor" was, the prophet did not intimate—for as yet he knew not. He may have conjectured, and so, it is not unlikely, did Saul. Some distinguished scion of some prominent family would naturally be thought of—some counsellor renowned for civic wisdom, or some warrior skilful and mighty in battle. But the Lord's thoughts are not as man's thoughts. The instrument of his high purposes he had selected then, as often since, from an obscure station; the favored person was one of the very last the world in general would have dreamed of. It was a shepherd-boy, the youngest of a large and not distinguished family, who, while Samuel was with many tears pleading with God for Saul, was keeping his flock, it may be, under the star-lit sky, beholding above him, with mingled wonder and devotion, the handiwork of God—it was that youthful rustic, who was to sit on the throne of Israel, who was to occupy on the page of history a loftier place than earthly monarch, before or since, has ever known; who with the highest military prowess, and the most exalted statesmanship, was to conjoin the loftiest poetic genius—the tones of whose harp were to resound through all climes and through all ages;

DAVID.

who was to be at once the "man after God's own heart," and the prophet and most eminent type of the God-man.

Of the anointing of DAVID at Bethlehem, which soon followed, no public announcement was made by Samuel. It would not have been safe, humanly speaking, nor was it on any account needful. God, the prophet knew, would bring the transaction to light, and incontestably ratify it, in his own time and his own way. Nor does it appear that any rumor of it was, for a considerable time at least, spread abroad from the family of Jesse. It is not to be presumed that David's brethren were wholly destitute of envy; the language of Eliab on a subsequent occasion would lead us to a different conclusion. But the time of David's actual exaltation to the throne had not been predicted. That event might seem remote, Saul being yet in power, and in the fulness of his strength, physical as well as political; and the prospect of it might hence, to the eye of jealous ambition, be less annoying. Besides, family pride was concerned, and possibly the safety of the family. It was God's prophet, moreover, who had spoken—David was prospectively God's anointed—and seared must be the conscience that was not in some measure awed. Many are the ways in which unmortified envy in human hearts is kept in temporary abeyance. As for David himself, he well understood that he had been merely anointed as Saul's successor, not as now entitled to the throne. By the original cast of his mind, as one of "nature's noble-men," he was predisposed to "bide his time." They only who have hearts and minds to do this, are of the truly heroic class—the contrivers and achievers of great things. Great natural bravery is there often in quiet and patient waiting. David, besides, was under the influence of gracious affections; he was of a lowly spirit, he was disposed to follow reverently and conscientiously the leadings of God's providence. He could say, as in the 131st Psalm, written at a period

but little later than that we contemplate, and having reference to charges of ambition which had been preferred against him :—" Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty ; neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother : my soul is even as a weaned child."

The way was soon prepared, however, without either his agency or knowledge, for his introduction at court, and what may be regarded as his first entrance upon public life. The change of dynasty being determined, " the Spirit of the Lord," it is written, " departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him." Remorse preyed upon his spirit—the consciousness that God had forsaken him, was heavy on his soul—the word of the Lord by Samuel, who now significantly shunned his presence, was ever ringing in his ears—while envy, pride, jealousy, and ambition were burning in his inmost soul. A temperament not naturally morose, so far as appears, became morbidly sensitive, gloomy, fitful, and irascible. Sad enough the state of a heart thus deserted of God, thus left to itself, without taking into the account that " spirit which now worketh in the children of disobedience," and which, in the olden time, was often, in the permissive sense, " an evil spirit from the Lord." The servants of Saul took note of the change in him ; they witnessed often, doubtless, outbursts of passion ; and for their own sakes, if not for the love they bore him, they sought a remedy. In courtier-like phrase, they approach him, making no allusion to any fault of his, but simply ascribing his mental disturbances to an invisible and supernatural agency. The means of relief they suggest—not untried or unlauded in modern times—is the power of music. A cunning player on the harp is proposed, and the suggestion finds favor with the melancholy monarch. Note now the terms of commendation in which, by one of the servants of Saul,

DAVID.

David is mentioned. "I have seen," said he, "the son of Jesse, a Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the Lord is with him." How plain that from his boyhood his had been no listless, indolent life. How evident, that since the anointing at Bethlehem especially, he had proved himself worthy of his high calling. Without the slightest suspicion that David was the "neighbor" destined to succeed him on the throne, Saul calls him to his presence. Well may poetry and painting celebrate as they do the performances of the youthful Hebrew minstrel before his troubled and gloomy king. With the notes of his harp may have been blended some of those very strains of divine poesy which, with refreshing and inspiring power, linger still upon the ears of the sorrowful and the desponding. The cunning player found favor with the king. He was made—nominally and by way of honorary distinction at least—Saul's armor-bearer; and the consent of Jesse was obtained to his remaining at court. At each recurrence of Saul's malady, the harp of David availed to soothe it; so that at length, we are told, "the evil spirit departed from him." Then, we may presume, his services being no longer needed, and the quiet tending and folding of his flock being more attractive to his serene and heavenly spirit than the splendors of the court, he returned to his father's house at Bethlehem.

Pass we now to the next important period in the early development of his character and destiny. Several years had elapsed, spent by him mainly, it is probable, in rural pursuits, when a war broke out between Israel and the Philistines—a war chiefly remarkable as the occasion of one of the most memorable deeds of his life. His three eldest brothers had gone to the battle; and he at length was commissioned by his father to visit the army, and kindly inquire after their welfare. Why he, rather than one of the other sons was

selected, we are not informed; perhaps his eminent prudence and fidelity indicated him, though the youngest, as in those troublous times the most fitting messenger. Be man's view what it might, God's design was soon apparent. It was at a critical juncture he entered the camp. Long had the antagonist armies lingered on two opposite mountains, with the valley of Elah between them. Occasional skirmishing had taken place; but a general and decisive engagement had been singularly delayed—not from a wise Fabian policy, but from causes less honorable to Saul and to Israel. Just at the moment of David's coming, however, the two armies were set in battle array; and as he passed among the ranks of his countrymen, his heart exulted in the hope, little warranted indeed by the real state of the case, that victory would be theirs. How strangely to his view was the scene now suddenly changed! As he waited for the onset, forth from the host of the Philistines came the proud giant of Gath, with helmet of brass and coat of mail; the staff of his spear like "a weaver's beam," and his "spear's head" weighing "six hundred shekels of iron." Again—as day by day he had done for forty days past—he defied the armies of Israel; and proposing to settle the question of victory by single combat, called on them for a champion. And now, as at his previous appearances, his presence spread consternation through the ranks of Israel. No one responded to his summons—"they fled from him, and were sore afraid." The truth was, Saul's confidence in God was gone—the *morale* of the army was at a low point—a strange pusillanimity seemed to have possessed them. Not so with the shepherd-boy, whom Providence had thus called to behold their disgrace. He cared not so much for the reward Saul had promised to him who should slay Goliath—the freedom of his father's house from tax or custom, the king's daughter in marriage, and great riches. It was for the honor of his country he was concerned, and above all of

his country's God. "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine," he exclaimed, "that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

The zeal he evinced, so contrasted with the temper of the army, attracted the notice of his brother Eliab. This turn of the narrative is worthy of attention, as further illustrating the spirit of David. Perhaps Eliab felt that his own timidity had been rebuked. "His anger was kindled against David." He sternly and harshly inquired why he had come, and with whom he had left "those few sheep in the wilderness." He assured him, that whatever were his present professions, he knew his "pride," and the "naughtiness" of his heart. From no worthy purpose had he visited the camp, but from a vain curiosity, or an unhallowed ambition. Perhaps Eliab secretly anticipated some such display of prowess, as would pave the way for David's predicted investment with royal dignity. Envy, so apt to rise among brethren, doubtless stirred in his heart. But in how different a spirit, how wise and becoming, was the brief reply of David! There was no harshness in it—no return of railing for railing. "What have I now done? Is there not a cause?" Is there not reason at such a juncture for zeal and courage, and even for the perilling of life?

David comes at length before Saul, and boldly proposes himself to "go and fight with this Philistine." Perceiving him to be a mere boy—and, from changes time had made, as well perhaps as the disorders his own mind had suffered, failing to recognize him as the youth years ago recommended to him as "a mighty valiant man"—he suggests discouraging considerations. But the heart of David is unmoved, and he responds in a strain to which no paraphrase can do justice. "Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock; and I went out after him and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and

D A V I D.

when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. David said moreover, the Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." What a vista is opened here into the early and more private life of the son of Jesse! We see by what exercises of faith, what deeds of unostentatious heroism, he was prepared for his more public and imposing trials and triumphs. "The child is father of the man;" or as David's successor on the throne has practically shaped the same sentiment, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." No matter in what wilderness God may place us, or what charge comparatively unimportant he may give us. We may take encouragement from that scripture, embracing at once a law of human development, and a purpose of the Divine Providence and grace—"Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things."

We need not dwell on the details of David's victory, so prominent is the whole scene, even in childhood's panorama of Scripture wonders. A strange sight it was to see that stripling, Saul's cumbersome armor discarded, and his only weapon a sling and a stone, going forth to meet the mailed and armed giant, before whom a whole army had trembled! To the mingled daring and patriotism of that undertaking history has given us no parallel, not even in such contests as that of the Horatii with the Alban brothers, or of him who, single-handed, held in check the forces of the Etrurian king. But the chief charm of the scene, to the eye of the Christian, is the faith of the victor. It was "in the name of the Lord of Hosts," David went forth. It was not in his own arm he trusted. "This day," he said, "will the Lord

DAVID.

deliver thee into mine hand." And the end he sought, dearer to him than the mere overthrow of Philistia, his own language to Goliath indicates,—“that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and all this assembly shall know, that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear.”

David was now recalled to court, and a high station in the army assigned him. His promised alliance with the royal family was for the present deferred ; precisely on what pretext does not appear, but certain it is, that no complaints on his part are on record. Whatever his wishes may have been, he had learned submissively and quietly to wait on Providence. So wisely did he in all respects deport himself, that he became a favorite with all classes. There was danger in this sudden elevation, and especially in this sudden eclat.

“ Oh popular applause, what heart of man
Is proof against thy sweet seducing charms !”

To the young heart, as He well knows who made it, and who with kindest care watches over the steps of his people, there is in this direction peculiar peril. We need not wonder then—intent as Providence was on training the conqueror of Goliath for a life of lofty achievement—that just here commenced one of his severest afflictions, the long course of persecution at the hand of Saul. We can only glance at this dark and troublous period, at the treachery and malignity of the king, and the straits and sorrows of the object of his hate. Now, as David kindly plays upon his harp before him, that he may drive away “the evil spirit,”—the same he had before expelled—the ungrateful king seeks to slay him with his javelin. Now, with a cooler but more diabolical subtilty, he proffers him his daughter Merab in marriage, that he may “bring upon him the hand of

the Philistines." Having violated his word by giving her to another, he makes a like proposal, with a similar design, in regard to his daughter Michal. For a little time the remonstrances of the noble-hearted Jonathan seem to prevail, but again the rage of the king is aroused ; and as David, now his son-in-law, like some ministering angel again plays before him, regardless both of kingly honor, and of his new parental relationship, he seeks afresh to smite him "even to the wall." Baffled here, he sends messengers by night to David's house "to watch him, and to slay him in the morning ;" and they fail of their errand only through Michal's love and sagacity. No longer safe at court, David escapes ; and henceforth is he hunted from place to place, like a wild beast of the forest, or some blood-stained fugitive from public justice. Not even in the dwelling of the venerable Samuel at Naioth, or with Ahimelech the priest at Nob, is he out of danger. He flees at length, an exile from his native land, to Achish of Gath. Returning again, the cave of Adullam is his refuge ; and we have an affecting display of filial kindness, in his seeking for his father and his mother, who he feared might otherwise share in his disastrous fortunes, a safe retreat with the king of Moab. "Let them be with you," he said to the king, in few but touching words—reminding one of the filial tenderness of his great Antitype on the cross—"till I know what God will do for me." Those he best loved well cared for, now he hides himself in the forest of Hareth, and now, having patriotically and gallantly rescued Keilah from the enemies of his country, he flees thence at the coming of Saul, to the wilderness of Ziph. Now Saul pursues him in the desert places of Maon, and "upon the rocks of the wild goats" in Engedi ; and now "in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon." Weary at length of these incessant persecutions, David leaves again the land of his fathers, and sojourns with his household at Gath. He finds at the hand of a heathen king, that

kindness and protection which the divinely anointed monarch of Israel had denied him.

How sore a trial were these wanderings and adversities, these manifold and distressing straits! How well fitted at once to detect the baser metal, and to discover and refine the pure gold! We say not that in all these changes and exigencies fault of no sort is to be ascribed to David. That were to deny the truthful and most impartial record God has given us. We must condemn the falsehood into which his fears betrayed him, as he fled from Saul to Ahimelech; a falsehood probably not premeditated, but as painful in the retrospect to himself as it proved harmful to the priests at Nob. Bitter was the self-reproach, and most ingenuous, with which he said to Abiathar, "I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father's house." We cannot justify his feigned insanity at Gath; it indicated a sad flagging of his faith; it was a shift that ill became the conqueror of the lion and the bear, and the mighty champion of the Philistines. Yet we may not forget the perils of his case, or that sentiment of his inspired son, "Oppression maketh a wise man mad." Nor can we doubt, that he soon regained his wonted trust in God; the 34th and 56th Psalms, composed on that occasion, amply evince this. Strains of loftier faith than these Psalms contain, man has never uttered. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. * * The young lions do lack and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." "Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle; are they not in thy book? When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back: this I know; for God is for me." We approve not David's design of vengeance against the churlish and ungrateful Nabal; though we may not overlook the sore provocation he had received, or the frankness so characteristic of him, with which, when

by Abigail's "meekness of wisdom" he had been dissuaded from his purpose, he blessed God that He had "kept his servant from evil." His occasional despondency, of course, was no part of the excellence of his character; as when he said in his heart, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul." Yet is it wonderful, when we call to mind his weary septennary of various trial? Easier is it to censure, than in like straits to avoid his error. There may be some question as to the wisdom of his first flight to Gath; and in view of all God had done for him, and all the circumstances of his case, there is ampler ground for doubt in regard to the second. There was not only implied in these movements, in the latter especially, a measure of unbelief, but there was in both cases a running into temptation—out of which, as the history shows, he came not wholly unscathed. We deny none of these blemishes so distinctly brought to view in the Scripture narrative; yet, after all, in the main cast of his character, as well at this period as in the general course of his life, he well deserved the appellation divinely given him, "a man after God's own heart."

Worthy of special note is the conscientiousness and stern self-denial, with which, in spite of all the cruel persecutions he had experienced, and in opposition to most specious solicitations and reasonings, he steadfastly respected Saul's right to the throne. As an illustration of this, recur to the scene in the wilderness of Engedi. With three thousand chosen men, Saul is in hot pursuit of the hated son of Jesse. Fatigued by his marches and explorations on rocky heights, and in the rough wilderness, he comes at length to a quiet and spacious cave; and in that cool and inviting retreat, leaving his men for a time—as he dreams not that the object of his pursuit is near—he covers his feet and gives himself to refreshing repose. Yes, all unattended he sleeps, while David and his men are in the sides of that very cave;

DAVID.

and they now behold, some of them with exulting joy, their malignant enemy completely in their power! What a temptation to David to terminate at once and triumphantly his wanderings and his woes! A single blow, and the work is done. Is not Saul already virtually deposed? Has not God himself pronounced his doom? Is he not utterly unworthy to reign? Do not the good of Israel and the honor of Jehovah demand his overthrow? Has he not forfeited all claim to forbearance by his perfidious and vindictive bearing toward God's chosen and anointed one? To the thoughts that perchance arise in David's own heart, plausible persuasions are added by his men. "Behold the day," they whisper to their leader, as they gaze on the slumbering king, "of which the Lord said unto thee, Behold I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as seemeth good unto thee." Now rises David, sword in hand, and approaches Saul, his attendants looking, perhaps, for the fatal stroke. But lo, he holds fast his integrity; he does but cut off, as a proof and memento of it, a part of the skirt of Saul's robe;—and even for this, as possibly implying a lack of respect for the Lord's anointed, his heart afterward smites him! With a loftiness and firmness of principle above all praise, he says to his men, "The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord." He stays not only his own hand, but the hand of his followers. Nay, he repeats this nobleness, when on the hill of Hachilah the king is again in his power. To Abishai's earnest request that he may be permitted to smite Saul to the earth, David's prompt and decided response is, "Destroy him not."

The guilty career of Saul came at length to a sad and ignominious close. By his own hand he fell on Mount Gilboa, his three sons, according to the fearful oracle from the lips of Samuel, having been

previously slain. When tidings of this came to David, the magnanimity of his soul shone out anew. It was not wonderful that he should lament for Jonathan. A friendship of the tenderest and loftiest kind, springing not from youthful fancy alone, or from the force of circumstances, but founded on intimate virtuous sympathies, on likeness of soul in all that is excellent—a model friendship for all times—had long subsisted between them. But was it to be expected that David should mourn over his fallen foe, the malicious, reckless man, whose causeless hostility had embittered so many of his early years? Turn now to his memorable Elegy, and mark the contrast between the spirit it exhibits and the hot haste, we say not with which traitors or conquerors have seized on a vacant throne, but with which even cherished sons, while yet a father's form was scarcely cold in death, have plucked the diadem from his brow. It was not strange that Richard Cœur de Lion, successful in his unnatural rebellion, should pour out bitter lamentations at his father's bier. It was the welling up of long suppressed filial tenderness—it was the mighty stirring of remorse in his soul. That was a politic and most profitable sorrow which Queen Elizabeth professed, when the captive Mary had by her own warrant been consigned to the scaffold. Either as felt or feigned, it implied no special excellence. We can easily account, and on the most ordinary principles, for the tears of the triumphant Cæsar, as the head of his fallen rival, Pompey, was shown him. But the outburst of David's grief over the slain Saul, can be only referred to a disinterestedness and loftiness of soul, the like of which the world has seldom seen. We quote his "Lamentation," in the faithful and spirited version of Professor Robinson,* as, in addition to its moral aspects, of unsurpassed poetic beauty:—

* Biblical Repository, vol. iv., p. 600.

DAVID.

David's Lament.

2 Sam. 1: 19-27.

19. Beauty of Israel, slain upon thy mountains!
How are the mighty fallen!
20. Tell it not in Gath,
Publish it not in the streets of Askelon,
Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,
Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.
21. Mountains of Gilboa!
No dew, nor rain upon you,
Nor fields of offerings!
For there was cast away the shield of the mighty,
The shield of Saul not anointed with oil.
22. From the blood of the slain, from the flesh of the mighty,
The bow of Jonathan turned not back,
The sword of Saul returned not in vain.
23. Saul and Jonathan were loving and pleasant in their lives,
And in their death they were not divided.
They were swifter than eagles,
They were stronger than lions.
24. Daughters of Israel! weep over Saul,
Who clothed you in scarlet with delights,
Who put ornaments of gold upon your apparel.
25. How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle!
O Jonathan, slain upon thy mountains!

D A V I D .

26. Woe is me for thee my brother Jonathan !

Very pleasant hast thou been to me ;

Thy love to me was wonderful,

Passing the love of women !

27. How are the mighty fallen !

And the weapons of war perished !

Now is David crowned as king of Judah ; and after long contest with the house of Saul, as king of Israel. The ark, the dearly prized symbol of God's presence, is brought up "from the house of Obededom into the city of David with gladness." The Philistines, the Moabites, and the Syrians are vanquished ; and greatly is the kingdom enriched and strengthened. He who first met us as an obscure rustic, is now at the very summit of earthly prosperity and greatness. More perilous now are the paths he treads than any with which his feet were familiar when hunted by Saul "as a partridge on the mountains." Great reason is there in such case to say,

—— "More the treacherous calm I dread,
Than tempests breaking o'er my head."

Ah, had David duly felt that sentiment, he had been spared the shame and agony of that sad lapse so faithfully recorded in God's word !

The history of his fall and his recovery is full of admonition and instruction. We see how the heart may be *laid open to temptation*. David had yielded somewhat to the enervating and ensnaring influence of his high position. He had grown unwatchful, slothful, and self-indulgent. At the time "when kings go forth to battle," instead of sharing with his army at Rabbah the toils and perils of the siege,

D A V I D .

he remains at his ease in Jerusalem ; and we find him, when a sight of his danger would have driven him to his knees, lounging on his couch at eventide.

“ O luxury !

Bane of elated life, of affluent states,

What dreary change, what ruin is not thine ?”

We see *the downward tendency of sin*, and how one transgression makes way for another,—yea, draws many others after it, all bound together as the links of a strongly wrought chain. It was but a casual look at the outset ; but it is improperly repeated, and then unhallowed desire is awakened. David’s first thought probably was, to add the unknown object of his passion to the number of his lawful wives. But he had gone too far to pause, when the honor and the rights of another, and all the sacredness of the nuptial tie rose up in his way. The guilty deed is done ; and now it must be covered—first by deceit, and by putting “ an enemy into the mouth ” of his injured servant, “ to steal away his brains ;” and when nothing else will avail, by slaying that same faithful one, “ with the sword of the children of Ammon !”—We see *into how profound a stupor the conscience even of a good man may fall*. Is it possible, that he whose heart smote him when he had merely cut off the skirt of Saul’s robe, should now say calmly and unblushingly, when he hears of Uriah’s death—as if it were all the work of Providence—“ the sword devoureth one as well as another ?” What an evidence of the blinding, hardening power of sin, that for a twelvemonth, and that in daily attendance upon the ordinances of religion, he could remain unawakened and unhumiliated—that even when Nathan came to him, instead of anticipating his reproof, and readily applying the parable of the ewe

DAVID.

lamb to himself, he seemed not to dream of such a use of it, and was only aroused by the prophet's direct appeal! An instructive chapter would be the full history of the sophistries by which conscience was for so long a time held in check. It is by substantially the same delusions, doubtless, many a modern professor of religion keeps himself quiet amid sad backslidings. Satan's opiates for the soul are few of them new-fangled. New hues and labels they may have, but most of them are in their essential elements as old as human depravity. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

But while we muse mournfully over David's fall, we may not forget the bright aspects of his case. The signs of a renewed nature are unmistakably upon him. We see this in a striking point of view, as we contrast his character with that of his persecutor Saul. Saul's transgressions were not only committed deliberately—as for example, many of his cruel attempts upon David's life; but they were often repeated, and that after checks, reproofs, and even confessions. They indicated fixed purpose, and deep-seated principle—a settled *habit* of evil. David's had in them more of sudden impulse and precipitate passion. He falls but once into a sin like that in the matter of Uriah; but once does he act out a lurking spirit of pride and ambition in a needless and unauthorized numbering of the people.—In none of David's backslidings is there a deliberate and intentional turning from God to other and forbidden sources of help. Even in his greatest lapse, there is no evidence that he either repudiated or forsook the sanctuary-service. Formal he was, but neither infidel, atheistical, or idolatrous. When choice of chastisement was in one case given him, he said, "Let us fall now into the hand of the Lord, for his mercies are great, and let me not fall into the hand of man." Saul turns madly and desperately away from Jehovah, to commune, in despite of his law, with one "that hath a familiar spirit." If heaven

will not help him, he will even try what the powers of darkness can do.—There is a radical difference between these two men, besides, in respect to their exhibitions of penitence; and just at this point it is, that the fallen child of God may be always best distinguished from the grovelling hypocrite. Saul is slow to own his guilt. In the matter of Amalek, he pertinaciously defends himself; it is only by the clearest proofs and sharpest appeals, the prophet forces him to confession. But how prompt is David both to acknowledge his wanderings, and to retrace his steps! To the respectful remonstrance of the wife of Nabal, he answers, “Blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou.” To the appeal of Nathan his simple, full-hearted response was, “I have sinned against the Lord.” Nay, when the unlawful census of the people had been taken—without reproof from man, if we except the expostulation of Joab at the outset—his own “heart smote him.” He slumbered not as before—such progress had grace made—until the voice of a prophet aroused him. Saul’s confessions, when made, were but partial; like the first transgressors, he casts the blame in a measure upon others. “I feared the people,” he says, as touching Agag and the Amalekites, “and obeyed their voice.” But David’s acknowledgments how frank and full! On this point let the 51st Psalm speak, and his other penitential Psalms. And as to any transfer of his guilt, listen to his memorable words after the numbering of the people:—“Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? Let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father’s house.” Saul was careful of his own reputation, even when he could not but acknowledge his misdoing. “I have sinned;” he says to Samuel, “yet honor me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel.” But David, when told that he had “given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme,” gave utterance to his penitence in a Psalm

for public use—a Psalm which, whenever sung, must bring to mind the great guilt of him who composed it. He made a standing confession of his sin, not for his own age alone, but for all ages; not for his own nation merely, but for all kindreds, tongues and people. David's offence was, we admit, most aggravated. We will not seek to palliate it, as with some show of reason we might, by reference to the customs of the age, to the license, especially, so generally accorded to the monarchs of the East. Let it stand—condemned as it is by God, and no less severely by the offender himself. But if the sin was great, great was also his penitence—hardly surpassed since the world began, for sincerity, fulness, depth, magnanimity, and for the fruits it brought forth. It is well that the honest pen of inspiration has given us David's whole case; for we see in it what human nature is—what a renewed man is, both in his best and his worst estate—what godly sorrow for sin is. We see, too, how abounding is the divine mercy. While some have stumbled into hell over the fallen monarch of Israel, there are many others now in heaven doubtless, who owe the first awakening of hope in their hearts, or their restoration from sad wanderings, to the encouragement afforded by this one example. Depths of despondency there are, which only such encouragement could reach.

In the *chastisements* David was called to suffer, there is ampler instruction, both in their earthward and heavenward relations, than our limits will embrace. It is worthy of notice that most of them, those particularly which followed his great sin, were, as God's corrections are apt to be, *in the line of the offence*. It was this that gave poignancy to his grief, as he lay all night upon the earth, pleading with God for his sick child. Sad is it always for a parent to look upon a dear child's agony—upon the agony, especially, of an infant child—sad to think of yielding up the cherished one to the shroud and the

grave. But how heart-rending if he recognize in that suffering the consequence and the punishment of his own sin! In the horrible crime of Amnon, and the bloody vengeance taken by Absalom, David was again reminded of his own great offence. His example had emboldened Amnon in his licentious courses; and while the memory of it paralyzed his own chastising arm, had indirectly occasioned Absalom's fratricide. It was not merely at the dreaded loss of his crown or his life, he wept as he went up Olivet, fleeing before a rebellious son. Nor was it at the thought alone that all this had been predicted by the prophet. It had many a natural connection, he saw clearly, with his own sins. Far more terrible was it, as thus apprehended, than would have been any purely arbitrary infliction. But under all these overwhelming griefs, how meek and submissive, how broken-hearted was he! "Carry back the ark of God," he said unto Zadok. He felt himself unworthy of this precious token of God's presence. "If I shall find favor in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and show me both it and his habitation: but if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him." Even Shimei must not be stayed by violence. "Let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him." His bitter weeping for Absalom, when the news of his death reached him, sprung not from unsubmitiveness or ingratitude; nor yet alone, we may add, from that intenseness of parental love so natural to a man of his ardent, enthusiastic temperament. It was the voice also of deep contrition. Absalom had greatly sinned, and had justly perished, had been cut off as by God's hand, in the very act of transgression. "But oh," his bitter musings doubtless were, "How much were my own sins concerned in the matter! But for my ill example, and that laxness of parental discipline which conscious guilt and my too indulgent and yielding temper occa-

D A V I D.

sioned, how different might have been the destiny of my poor misguided boy!"

But we must hasten to the close of our rapid and imperfect sketch. A volume were insufficient to do the subject justice. Of no one character in the whole compass of revelation, save that only of "the man Christ Jesus," is the record so full. On his pious joy, as the ark was carried up from the house of Obed-edom, to the city of David—on his kindness to Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, and the whole account of the memorable friendship between Jonathan and himself—on his disinterestedness and stern integrity in punishing the murderers of Ish-bosheth, the son of Saul—and on many other interesting passages of his history, we have had no room to dwell. We can only glance now at the final scenes of his life. He had early formed the design of building a house for the Lord; but had been told by the prophet, that this was to be accomplished not by himself, a man who had "shed blood abundantly," and had "made great wars," but by the "man of rest" who should succeed him. He yields submissively to the Divine intimation; he blesses God that such a privilege is in any way to be conferred on his house. Industrious, and at great expense, he gathers materials for the use of his son; thus setting an example—specially appropriate to this present age of immediateism—of quietly and faithfully toiling for other times; thus showing most clearly—what it were well if many a bustling forth-putting spirit of our day would show—a regard, not for his own aggrandizement, but for God's glory. As his end draws near, the setting of that sun in brightness which had risen in clouds, and which once at least had suffered sad and perilous eclipse, he calls together the officers of his household, with the captains of the army, and all the princes of the people. Raised by the occasion above his bodily pains and infirmities, the gray-haired king, venerable in aspect and more venerable in

DAVID.

character, stands "up upon his feet." A scene this, such as Israel had never witnessed since the day when Moses gave them his parting counsels! David rehearses the dealings of God with him in relation to the proposed building of the temple, declares to the people what preparation he had himself made, and exhorts them to liberal offerings. He commits the work, with the pattern of it, to his beloved and trusted Solomon; and, as with his dying breath, gives him a charge, inimitable for its pertinency, pathos and power. "And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy fathers, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever. Take heed now; for the Lord hath chosen thee to build an house for the sanctuary: be strong, and do it." This charge uttered, and reverently received, and the willing offerings of the people multiplied, "David the king also rejoiced with great joy." He blesses the congregation, and pours out his heart before God, in mingled utterances of holy solicitude for Solomon and the people, and of deep humiliation, adoration and thankfulness. He calls upon the assembly to bless God; and, with his hearty concurrence, Solomon is formally and solemnly anointed as king. Then, his work done, his enemies all vanquished, the fulfilment of his fondest desire secured, "having served his own generation by the will of God," he fell asleep, "in a good old age, full of days, riches and honor."

How precious is the legacy he has left us, not only in the admonitory and instructive story of his life, but in those sacred lyrics, which in every succeeding age have comforted and gladdened the people of God! "Where," says Luther, "canst thou find nobler words of joy than in the Psalms of praise and thanksgiving? There thou mayest look into the hearts of all good men, as into beautiful and pleasant

DAVID.

gardens ; yea, as into heaven itself. How do grateful, and fine, and charming blossoms spring up there, from every kind of pleasing and rejoicing thoughts of God and his goodness !” And if it be true, as Lord Bacon has remarked, that “if you listen to David’s harp, you shall hear as many hearse-like airs as carols,” the wants of our sinful and sorrowing humanity are all the better met. The accumulation of material for the temple, however praiseworthy, was of far less consequence than the provision made by the “sweet Psalmist of Israel” for its spiritual service—than the furnishing, we may add, to us and to the whole church, of all the great elements of prayer and praise. As the hand of David sweeps now his heavenly harp, with what joy and thankfulness must he hear echoed and re-echoed from all places of Christendom—if indeed the imperfect melodies of earth ever reach the ears of the blessed—those same notes which he struck of old, by the quiet sheepfolds of Bethlehem, in the gloomy recesses of the wilderness of Ziph, in the halls of his palace at Jerusalem, and which fell on the ears of the people from the “stringed instruments” of the Sanctuary !



W. H. Stiles del.

W. H. Stiles sculp.

S O L O M O N .

BY THE REV. N. L. FROTHINGHAM, D. D.

Two things are chiefly conspicuous in Solomon. These are, the splendor of his court, and his intellectual renown;—his magnificence, and his wisdom. The first surpassed all that was ever seen, precedent or subsequent, in a Jewish king. Indeed, it scarcely seems to be Jewish, but partakes rather of the pomp of the Asiatic despotisms. Though he was the builder of Jehovah's temple, he would hardly be recognized as belonging to Jehovah at all, if the noble passages connected with the fact of that building were erased from his history. Before the temple was completed, he burnt incense on the "high places" which the divine command had ordered to be destroyed; and after its dedication he set up altars to the gods of the heathen. Though he was the disciple of Moses, he ruled in entire disregard of the most solemn prohibitions. That prophet-lawgiver had said: "The king that shall be set over thee shall not multiply horses to himself; neither shall he multiply wives to himself; neither shall he greatly multiply silver and gold." And yet "Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen;" his harem was crowded with "seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred

SOLOMON.

concubines;" the targets of his armory and the cups for his revels were of solid gold, "for silver was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon." We are reminded here of the grand denunciation by the prophet Isaiah long afterwards: "Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people, because their land is full of treasures and of horses, and they are replenished from the East." This king of a land that was to be kept distinct from all other lands by a local, strict, and peculiar legislation, made alliance with Hiram of Tyre, a prince more generous than himself.* This, indeed, had been done by his father before him. But he made alliance also of a more tender and dangerous kind with Egypt. His ships were on the Red Sea, and pursued their regular voyages as far westward as the Spanish coast.

"The majesty of Solomon
How glorious to behold;
The servants waiting round his throne,
The ivory and the gold."

So sung the prince of modern psalmists; captivated with that picture of royalty to such a degree, that he daringly chose it as the most gorgeous spectacle of earthly splendor, to contrast it with the palace of the King of Heaven.

Thus much for his magnificence. Now for his wisdom. It had a great fame at home and abroad. So wonderful did it appear to the eyes of his people that they ascribed to it a supernatural character. Foreigners of distinction desired to become acquainted with his sagacity and learning. "All the earth," says the sacred historian, in the excess of his admiration, "sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom

1 Kings 9: 12—14.

SOLOMON.

which God had put into his heart." And of what kind was this wisdom? The holy writings enjoined, that he who sat upon the throne of the kingdom should write him a copy of the law of God, and that he should "read therein all the days of his life." But his learned curiosity loved to employ itself in another direction. He investigated the kingdoms of nature. Botany and zoology were favorite studies with him. He described the vegetable world, from the cedar of Lebanon to the small growths that push their way through the crevices between the stones. He described the animal world, from the heavy beast and the flying fowl down to the fish and the worm. His songs, we are told, were a thousand and five. One of these, called the Song of Songs, as if it were the best, has perhaps been handed down to us. His proverbs are a treasury of moral instruction, for the most part in a sententious form, but sometimes melting into tenderness, or rising into sublime conceptions. His Ecclesiastes, or Preacher,—if allowed to be genuine, which modern criticism with good reason denies,—is in a wholly different strain. It is sad and doubtful, enigmatical and obscure, half complaint and half riddle, and reminds us of the "dark sayings" with which the wise of antiquity were accustomed to exercise the wits of one another. Though admirable in parts, it is a piece of melancholy moralizing at the best we can make of it. Both of these works carry but a very slight stamp of the Jewish particularity upon them; and neither of them approaches in the least degree to the devotion, the sublimity, the sweet and profound sentiment, the beauty of every kind, that have made the Psalms of David the delight and the despair of all after ages. The book of the Wisdom of Solomon,—though acknowledged to be none of his, and thrown into the Apocrypha of the old Testament, is in every respect a grander work than any thing that has brought forward a more plausible pretension to be called by his name. In the Scriptures we have

SOLOMON.

an authentic account of a single instance of his practical acuteness and judicial skill, when the two mothers were brought before him, each asserting her right to the same child. It seems to be adduced as a sample of his quick discernment. And no wonder that it should be related immediately after the vision and the dream in Gibeon; and no wonder that "all Israel heard of the judgment and feared the king."

When we quit the testimony of these Scriptures, we find ourselves surrounded with frivolous traditions, with fairy fictions, and mere romance, concerning the prince who has filled the whole East with a sort of mystic and magic fame of his superhuman knowledge and power. Josephus is the first to begin this new strain, among his empty enlargements of the sacred narratives. He informs us in his wordy way, that king Solomon composed incantations, and described forms of driving out wicked spirits. He then goes on to tell a foolish story of one Eleazar, who, by means of a ring and some kind of drug prescribed by Solomon, drew out a devil through the nose of a possessed person. Here was a hint for the weavers of fiction all over that part of the world. It was eagerly taken up, and industriously expanded; as may be seen in many an Arabian and Persian legend. With fables about ring and seal and talisman, they would make the Jewish king, not the lord only of a few tribes at one end of the Mediterranean, but a sort of world-sultan, controller of the genii, and ruler over all the elements of nature. In such manner did they set forth his majesty and his wisdom; the two leading characteristics, with which these remarks began.

Let us now open the New Testament. We shall perceive that Solomon is here alluded to twice, and twice only. In both instances by our Saviour himself. And it is remarkable that these two instances have a precise application to the two points that have been mentioned.

SOLOMON.

In one, Jesus says, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of the lilies of the field ; and there sinks down his splendid dominion, as typified by his royal apparel, swallowed up in the cup of a flower. In the other, reference is made to the queen of the South, who came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon ; and would therefore rise up in the judgment to condemn the men of that generation, who would not even listen where they stood, when a greater than Solomon was there. Here vanishes away the wisdom of the earth's wisest, as if it were but a mist colored with the rays of truth which it intercepts,—when compared with the Divine Word that came down from heaven. Can these reflections be more usefully carried out, than by enlarging a little upon each of these two striking declarations ? We may thus hear the very Christ sum up the greatness of the hero of our theme, and signify his estimate of that greatness.

And first, of the contrast between human pomp and the glories of nature ;—between Solomon and the lilies. It is observable that the great Teacher from on high, always loved to dwell on those natural objects which are the most familiar, and carry with them the least pride of display. From them he drew his illustrations of the highest truths. From the divine care that was manifest over the minutest things, he taught how great that must be which watched over the interests of the whole family of man. He pointed to the smallest of birds, that were sold two for a farthing, when he declared that without the notice of the universal Father it neither flew nor fell ; and he was looking on a neglected wild-flower, when he said that Solomon in his imperial mantle was not so nobly arrayed. We may hesitate at this bold comparison when we first hear it, and ask if it can be understood in any other way than as a poetical extravagance, one of the exaggerations of Eastern speech. We may think it strange to be told, that

SOLOMON.

the kingcup, sparkling with dew in the morning light, is more beautiful than the diadem of a sovereign; and the common clothing of meadows and uplands, than his regal dress. But let us reflect more deeply on this. Let us see if the words of the Saviour may not be vindicated even to the letter; if they cannot be shown to be as strictly true as they are novel and impressive.

If we ask in the first place, what is the decision of philosophy upon the subject, we shall receive this answer. Natural philosophy sees in the garments of royalty, however exquisitely woven and brilliantly gemmed, nothing but a dead texture. All the changes they can show, are those of tarnishing and decay. They are cut off from the shining order of nature. They produce no beneficial effects on the surrounding elements, and receive none from them. Their only office is that of a vain show. But it discerns something far more excellent in the products of creation;—in the herb and tree, in the leaf, and blossom, and flower. However humble these may be, they belong to a vast, active, beneficent system. They have an organization of their own, set forth with singular provisions of wisdom. They change;—and so wonderfully as to elude all the search of science. They breathe;—absorbing just those portions and principles of the air which are vital to them, and giving out in return not only a pleasant fragrance, but those elements of the air which are vital to us. They grow;—and under the light, and warmth, and moisture of the skies, draw out nourishment from the sod where man moulders away in dust. It sees them not only gratifying the senses, but ministering to the renovation of that great but unseen tide from which we all drink; and their veins are often full of healing powers. It sees them united in various ways with the economy of the earth, and subservient to the comfort of those whom the earth feeds and supports.

We may ask next, what testimony our moral reflection will bear

SOLOMON.

on this point. Look at the glory of Solomon, and what do we behold there but the trappings of a short-lived authority ;—a pride that was soon to droop and pass away ? We see a grandeur, which, while it lasted, he owned to be vanity ; and which departed so soon that it proved itself to be no better than vanity. It glittered upon a frail form, that was bent with shame and repentance before it was bent with age, and has now been smaller than dust and lighter than breath for these three thousand years. Beneath one of the most famous churches in Italy is still shown the tomb of St. Charles Berroméo, which no one can have seen and forgotten. In that tomb,—if we must call it a tomb, which is as light as the absence of the sun and the solemnity of a sepulchre can permit it to be, and with walls as rich as golden embroidery and Tyrian purple can make them,—lies the embalmed body from which the life departed more than two hundred years ago. Those poor remains are surrounded with a splendor that only makes them appear more poor. They are enshrined in silver and the clearest crystal. The kings and queens of the earth have contributed of their choicest to the jewelry that gleams by the shrunken side, and around the bony forehead, and upon the blackened fingers of that remnant of mortality ;—dead things paying tribute to the dead ;—the precious stone that never felt to what feels no longer. We may be allowed to compare such a sight with the recollection of Solomon and his glory, his outside glory of sceptre and crown ; for he could have worn nothing more sumptuous, when he sat upon his ivory throne and between his molten lions, than lies buried with that Christian saint. And what a relief it was, to come up from that magnificent charnel-house, and gaze again upon nature's lovely and eternal face ! The same grass grows, and the same flowers bloom which the son of David saw. The fields of Judea are none the less fair because his throne has fallen, and the bones of his people have crumbled

SOLOMON.

beneath them. There is a living perpetuity in the works of the Almighty. It is true, they wither and droop, but not like the materials that mortal workmanship puts together. They will be renewed,—the falling leaf that is blown away with the wind, the sickening flower that is nipt with the frost. But who shall restore to the regalia their lost honors, when empire has failed, and when they who held it have gone to the land where artificial distinctions are unknown,—where are no crowns but those of immortality for them that shall see God?

Another consideration remains. What judgment does religion pronounce on the question before us? It tells us that the most brilliant decorations have tricked out the weakest, the unhappiest, and the worst of human beings; and that the most ordinary and the most servile minds admire them the most. It tells us that they owe their principal effect only to our own fancy. The diamonds of a prince are not in reality any brighter than the moist leaves that tremble in the sunbeams. The fur on the ermine's back, is just as beautiful when it protects the animal as when it lines the king's cloak. And it adds;—if the ideas of human dominion can lend such a charm to the clothing of monarchs, how royally should the simplest plant appear to send up its stem and hang out its flowers, when it claims a union with the presiding Spirit, and displays the condescending majesty of the King of kings! It tells us far more. If God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe us? He who has taught the tender plant how to guard itself from injury, will he be no protector for us? He who has taught the dependent vine how to cling by its tendrils, will he be no guide to train us upward? He who has taught the frail leaf how to draw sustenance from the moisture of the earth and the lustre of the sky,—will he not reveal to us the light of his countenance and the refreshing

SOLOMON.

of his grace, and show us the path of another life out of the hollow ground? We are of more value than the blades of a green field, or the cups of a flower-garden. Will he not clothe us with the raiment that his Providence supplies; and with spiritual garments; and with the celestial bodies of a world beyond the grave?

But the wisdom of Solomon! It is time that we now turned to that. It was a loftier thing, all must admit, than his might, and wealth, and courtly display. But how did it look in the eyes of the Redeemer? How does it appear now to a true Christian discernment? A greater than Solomon is here also,—in the lessons of a diviner truth. We may contrast these lessons with the wisdom that the queen of Sheba came to hold conference with so many ages ago. Several points of such contrast will readily suggest themselves.

Divine truth is brought through the Gospel “very nigh unto us;” and that deserves our thought as the first consideration. No one has to go from the uttermost parts of the earth for it, since it is not confined to any single spot. It is not to be sought for at any court. It has not set up its oracle in any temple. It is offered to us, and indolence is thus left without excuse. Heathenism dispatched its votaries to foreign shrines, that they might hear there the responses of a local divinity. Judaism was perpetually sending up its myriads to what it called the holy city, and the place of prayer for all nations. Every religion has had its places of peculiar sanctity, where men must wait for instruction, or where they must apply for divination, or where they must hope for acceptance. But the Gospel is spirit and life; not limited, not exclusive. It is a free gift. We have only to put out our hands and accept it. The religious of the ancient world did not appear before their altars without a victim; did not consult their oracles without a gift. Every thing was costly in what they required and

SOLOMON.

what they gave. The same is true of many of the attainments that we make in ordinary knowledge. They lie at a distance, and must be gone after. They are expensive, and must be paid for. The queen of the South went up to Jerusalem with camels that bare spices, and abundance of gold and precious stones. The richness of her presents heightened the opulence of Solomon himself. No such preparations and terms are required of us for enjoying the full benefits of that instruction, which is the wisdom of God unto salvation. It is to be procured without money and without price.

The wisdom of the Gospel is also unlike the hard questions and dark sayings, about which the Arabian queen came to exercise her wit with the most learned man of her time. It concerns itself with what is intelligible and clearly useful. It is not a riddle, or an enigma for speculatists to solve. It is not a set of hard opinions for zealots and disputants to whet contention upon. It is not a deep gulf of metaphysics, that makes the mind dizzy while it leans over it and disturbed on leaving its steep verge. It expresses its meaning in clear and direct words, because the meaning is for all and important to all. Its spirit is an earnest good-will; instructing us just there where to be ignorant would be unhappy, or unsafe; convincing us of what we should endeavor to become; revealing to us what we may be permitted to hope; snatching us away from the dominion of guilt and fear, and leading on to duty and a heavenly peace. This is not a spirit to deal in abstruse sentences, to utter itself ingeniously and ambiguously. It addresses the lowly and illiterate, persons of little leisure and few advantages, quite as much as the inquisitive, the studious, the distinguished. The law of the Lord makes the simple wise, but does not mean to make the wise contentious. The faith to which our reason attaches itself the most, is far removed from the vain strife of uncertain words. It is independent of all subtile distinctions. It

SOLOMON.

cannot balance its broad confidence upon little points of dubious, or far-sought speculation.

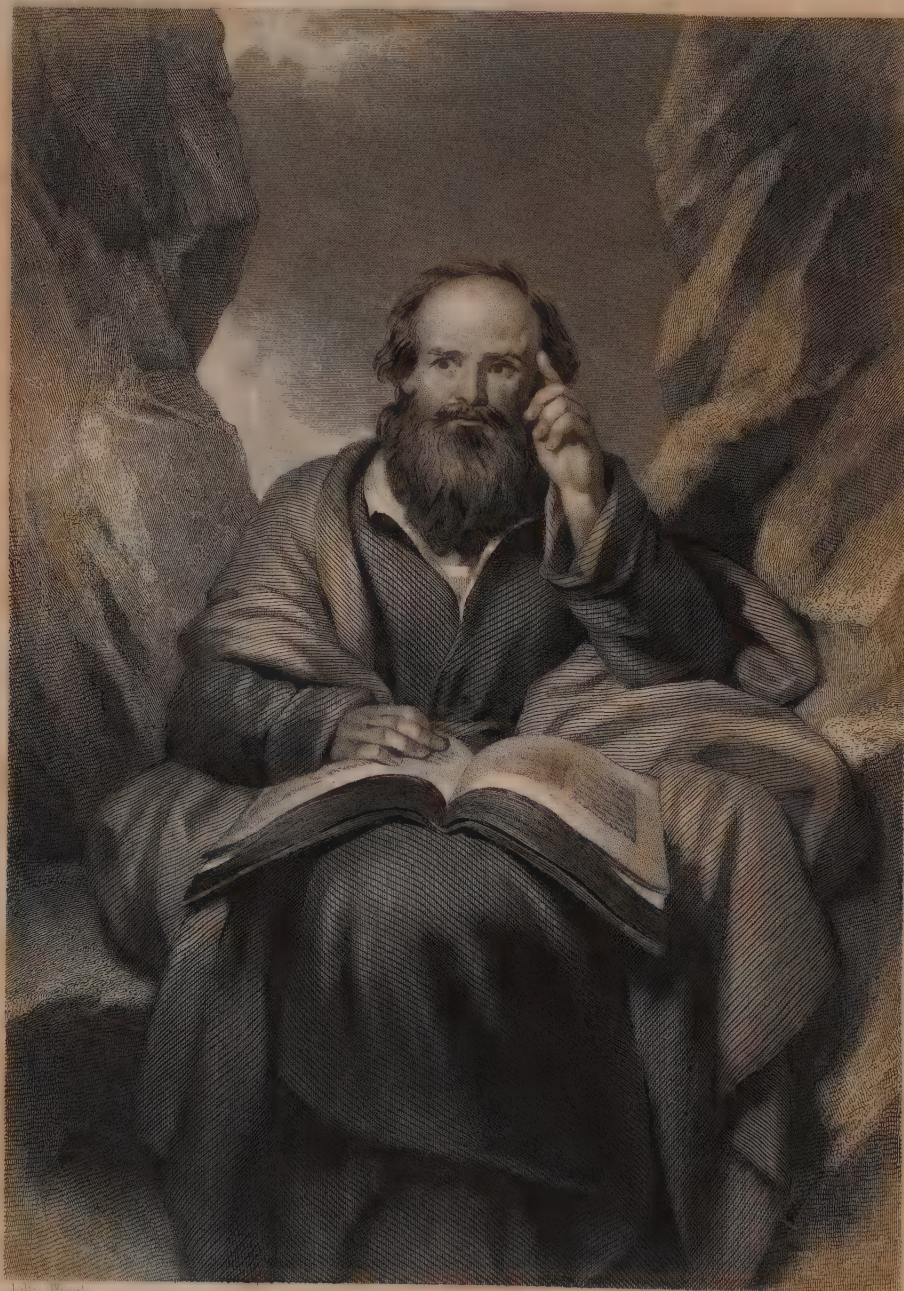
Last of all, and above all, we ought to reflect on what the great office of Christian wisdom is. Not to amuse the intellect, not to excite the imagination, not to study out the properties and laws of material things; but to direct the conscience, to purify the affections, to redeem the soul. It does not treat of intellectual puzzles, or passionate fictions, or sensible phenomena; but of eternal truths. The king of Israel might have been cunning in the solution of all intricate questions, while he put others in return that his rivals were unable to solve,—as Diodorus, the unknown historian, tells us he did to the king of Tyre. But this was only the gladiatorship of a dexterous mind. He might have scattered about his odes; and the musicians and singers of the crowded choirs that David his father had instituted, would have exalted them with courtly flattery and embellished them with all the sweetness of their art. But this was as laborious a trifling as the other had been. He might have been teeming with apophthegms more searching than his Proverbs. But they rather touched the superficial understanding, than went down into the depths of the human soul. He might have written more copiously on the subjects of natural history than did the Grecian preceptor of Alexander, or the atheistic Roman Pliny, or the French voluptuary Buffon, on whose statue was written the scarcely reverent inscription, that his genius was equal to the majesty of Nature herself. But the sublime strain in Handel's Oratorio of "Solomon" may well linger upon our ears:

"What though I trace each herb and flower
That drinks the morning dew?
Did I not own Jehovah's power,
How vain were all I knew!"

SOLOMON.

What earthly wisdom compares with that which informs us of the character and purposes of the supreme Mind ; unveils things invisible ; gives a sure conviction of things eternal ; and encourages the prone spirit of man to look up towards an incorruptible inheritance and a parental God ? How light in the balance, when poised against this, seem all the treasures of erudition ; all the weight of talent, and skill, and accomplishments ! Apply but the single word “ forever ” to them all, and it will disclose at once the eternal difference between them.

“ Forever ”—is the spell we utter. And whether there be tongues, they have ceased ; and whether there be knowledge, it has vanished away. But we cannot imagine the failure of heavenly Truth, and there is no extinction for the virtues which it nourishes. Where are now the thousand songs of the son of David ? Where are we to look for the three thousand maxims that he pronounced ? How many ages on ages have been left ignorant of all that he collected and discoursed on, as a student of Nature ! Yet the cedar still flourishes on Lebanon ; and the gazelle is running wild over the hills of Judah ; and the hyssop is still sprouting out of the miserable ruins where the glory of Judah sunk away. How perishable were the fruits of all his state policy and his keen discernment ! They did not avert even from his own days, the Divine rebukes. They could not hold together his parting kingdom for one short reign more. How does the excellence of all his wisdom grow dim in our eyes, when we remember that it could not preserve his declining years from dotage, and idolatry, and disgrace ! Science gives over its researches. Art withdraws its hand and forgets its cunning. Both soon. But there is no decay for the science of religious trust and experience ; and the art of doing well, will survive the wreck of every other.



J. W. Wood

W. H. Egleton

IS A I A H .

BY THE REV. CHARLES BURROUGHS, D. D.

“Oh Thou my voice inspire,
Who touched Isaiah's hallowed lips with fire.”

IN surveying the history of the Jews for about seven centuries, previous to the coming of the Messiah, it is delightful to observe the number of distinguished prophets, whom God raised up for their instruction and guidance. The great prevalence of ignorance and vice in those days, seemed to awaken a remarkable interposition of Divine mercy. As the clouds of calamity then became more dark and disastrous, the Divine efforts were more abundantly employed to diffuse over them the brilliant rays of hope and consolation. As destructive political tempests were soon to terminate the glory of Israel, and disperse her people among all the nations of the earth, and as Judah also in a few centuries after Israel's ruin was to lose her sceptre and her church, there was needed the counsel of inspired men to guide the doubting and comfort the faithful. The louder the storm raged, the bolder strains were required from the harp of prophecy. Besides, the approaching era of the Christian dispensation was one of such astonishing light and mercy, as demanded an august announcement by

the most illustrious heralds. Accordingly, within the course of three centuries preceding Malachi the last of the prophets, and who lived about four hundred years before our Saviour, appeared most of those holy seers, whose writings are embraced in the prophetical portions of the sacred canon. They form a glorious constellation in the pathway of Jewish history, and eloquently proclaim God's care and government of his chosen people, and his exceeding mercy to the whole human family.

Among the brightest of those prophetical stars that shed their gracious effulgence on suffering man, that clearly pointed the way to him, who was to be the light of the Gentiles and the glory of Israel, was Isaiah. The age in which he lived was one that eminently required his extraordinary powers and inspiration. The good which he has done must enroll him as one of the greatest benefactors of the human race. He was a peculiar blessing to his age; and yet, he lived not only for that, but for every age. The stream of his mercies will roll on for eternity. We never hear his name but it comes over us with an odorous refreshment, and becomes immediately invested with an unearthly splendor. If we open any part of his book, we feel an increasing spiritual elevation and fervor. He has been called the first of the great four prophets, a prophet of the highest eminence, the prince of the prophets, the evangelical prophet, the fifth evangelist, the brightest luminary of the Jewish church, and the Demosthenes of the Hebrews. He was in many respects the type and harbinger of our Saviour, and his name in the original implies, "the salvation of the Lord." It must, therefore, be acknowledged, that all the information which can be obtained respecting this illustrious personage, must form a most instructive and interesting portion of sacred history.

The first account which we have of Isaiah, is when he entered

ISAIAH.

upon his prophetic office. This was in the last year of the reign of Uzziah, about seven hundred and fifty-eight years before the birth of Christ, just about the time when Rome was founded, and when the Assyrian empire was divided into the two kingdoms of Assyria and Babylon; the former for scourging Israel, the latter for scourging Judah. Hence, there was something very remarkable about the era of the mission of the evangelical prophet. He belonged to the tribe of Judah, and was of royal birth, being the son of Amoz, and grand-nephew of Joash, king of Judah. His rank secured for him great privileges and advantages. His own distinguished genius and refined taste made him capable of every species of improvement that could be derived from education, and from the society and manners of the intellectual and accomplished. His writings demonstrate these positions. His vast knowledge, varied and accurate learning, great wisdom, majestic tone, enlarged views and abundant resources, all show that he must have been closely intimate with the most eminent men.

The first great incident which distinguished Isaiah's life, was his call to the prophetic office; an office instituted by the Almighty, and especially filled by his own divine authority. It was a most mighty instrument of his government, the revealer of his purposes, and the interpreter of his will. It was the highest possible honor to be intrusted with such a commission. It was the medium by which God conversed with man. Isaiah was set apart to this office before his birth, and Omniscience had named him. It is probable that he entered upon his solemn duties at an early period of his life, as he discharged them for more than sixty years; and we know, that some of the other prophets were not more than twenty years old when they received their appointment. He might have uttered some high and divine sayings ere he was admitted to his office; but the commission itself, as stated by the prophet, was the special authority on which was

grounded the exercise of his vocation. The commission was given in the year when king Uzziah died. Nothing can exceed the sublimity of that visionary transaction or scene. "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried to another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the doors moved at the voice of him that cried; and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone: because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he laid it upon my mouth and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips: and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin is purged. Also, I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. And he said, Go." The prophet also stated, in confirmation of the divinity of his mission, the extraordinary qualifications with which he was endowed. He asserted, that "God had made his mouth like a sharp sword; had hid him under the shadow of his hand; had made him a polished shaft, and hid him in his quiver; had given him the tongue of the learned, that he should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary; and also, that the Lord God wakeneth him morning by morning; he wakeneth his ear to hear as the learned." In every respect, therefore, must this evangelical prophet have been furnished with every requisite power for the discharge of his official duties.

Clothed with his extraordinary spiritual authority and influence,

standing on his high social elevation, invested with all that rank, learning, refinement, dignity, and taste could give him, he appeared before the Jews with the most imposing grandeur, and was held in the most profound veneration. He doubtless conformed to all the peculiar habits and manners of a prophet; such as simplicity of dress, plain and abstemious diet, seclusion from the indulgences of the world, and a close and fervent communion with God. Every thing in his writings betrays for him a life of ardent and unwearied piety. His mode of inspiration seems to have been by visions, when his soul was thrown into a sort of entranced state, when it was "rapt into future times," and when there were brought before him ideal scenes and events which were at some future day to have a complete fulfilment by realities. The whole of the long life of the prophet must have been absorbed in reading the chapters of futurity. His soul was honored, as the depository of volumes of the Divine will and purpose, respecting all the great interests of humanity; but more especially respecting the establishment, trials, increase, and triumphs of the church. Those scenes must have had a sublime and sanctifying influence over his mind, and he must have felt himself to be indeed a chosen arrow in the quiver of the Almighty. Such close converse with heaven must have made him indifferent to the vanities and indulgences of the world; must have filled him with reverence and love for Jehovah; must have given a singular importance and majesty to his words and actions; and must have made him the light, guide, and blessing of his nation.

Happy was it for Judea, that she was blessed with such an eminent prophet as Isaiah during the reigns of several kings—Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah—under which he lived, and amidst the tremendous crimes and calamities with which his country was then visited. He entered on his office in the last year of Uzziah's reign,

when Judea was suffering from the guilt of that monarch, who was then the victim of a judicial leprosy in consequence of having fallen from his piety, insulted the church, condemned the priesthood, assumed the sacred office, and burned incense on the altar. It was necessary that some able and bold reformer should rebuke such an offender, condemn such outrages on God's church, and lift up his voice in defence of religion and her altars. After the death of Uzziah came Jotham to the throne. For sixteen years, under the influence of the evangelical prophet, he managed with singular ability and success the affairs of the government of the church. Jotham was succeeded by Ahaz, a most infamous prince, who surrendered himself to every corrupt indulgence, established idolatry, offered incense on high places, burnt his children as a sacrifice to Moloch, and practised every species of abomination. His idolatry and guilt were visited by the judgment of God. The kings of Syria and Samaria invaded his country. Many thousands of persons were slain, and many thousands were made captives. Isaiah seemed at this time to be much at the court of Ahaz, and to exert all his influence for the public good. But his voice was ineffectual. The temple of Jerusalem was shut, idolatry was universal, and Judea was on the verge of destruction. Then came Hezekiah to the throne. With him Isaiah had great influence. A mighty reform was effected in the land. The temple was opened and cleansed; idolatry was abolished; and the passover was celebrated with a splendor unsurpassed since the days of Solomon. But there were storms raging, that threatened Judah's ruin. The Assyrian power came down like a torrent, in the earlier part of Hezekiah's reign, upon Samaria, and put an end to the kingdom of Israel, after it had been two hundred and fifty-six years a separate nation. The ten tribes were scattered among the nations, and nothing has since been known of them. Assyria was not satisfied with her prey. She longed for Jerusalem

and its treasures, and laid the city under an annual tribute of a million and a half of dollars. This did not satisfy the Assyrian's voracity. His pledge was violated. He besieged Jerusalem. Isaiah stood in the breach; and the army of the besiegers was miraculously destroyed. Isaiah witnessed these events; and they formed an important part of his prophecies. Manasseh succeeded Hezekiah, and established every kind of idolatrous abominations. He placed a graven image in the temple, and filled Jerusalem with innocent blood. Such was the state of things in Israel and Judah during the prophetic life of the illustrious Isaiah. Never was there an era when his wisdom, judgment, inspiration, and services could have been more needed, or when they could have proved more influential and serviceable.

Of the circumstances of his life, little is known. It is supposed that he resided chiefly at Jerusalem; exercising there his office, watching the political revolutions of the nations, and the proceedings of the court; dispensing there his counsels; and writing the history of Hezekiah's reign, and his prophecies, and also the history of Uzziah, which is unfortunately lost. Though educated in luxury, we are sure that his life was, from his entrance on his holy office till his death, an uninterrupted course of humility, piety, and holy zeal; and was ever devoted to the best interests of his country, and the glory of his God. His sublime work is a demonstration, that his spirit was ever soaring above the earth, and drinking in rapture from heavenly contemplations. His rank, learning, and worth, added to his inspiration, gave him an astonishing weight in the community, and power over the political destinies of his country. Amidst the various exigencies of the church and state, all eyes were directed to him. The monarchs under whom he lived felt an awe at his character, a confidence in his counsels, and a terror at his rebukes. The vanity of Hezekiah, when he showed his treasures to some foreign ambassadors from Babylon, did not escape

ISAIAH.

the expression of his indignation, nor the threats of a tremendous retribution. But when calamities came, and the lights of heaven and hope were eclipsed, the presence and voice of Isaiah changed the sad scene, and cheered every desponding heart.

His angel's face,
As the great eye of heaven, shined bright,
And made a sunshine in a shady place.

When Judah was in despair at the invasion and threats of Sennacherib, all eyes were turned with confidence and hope to Isaiah; and his admonitions, prayers, prophecies, and miraculous power, saved the nation, and turned an awful siege into a brilliant victory. When Hezekiah was dangerously sick, and his nation was in sackcloth to implore of God his recovery, all looked to Isaiah as the great physician; and he miraculously effected a cure; and gave additional proof of his power with God, by making the shadow on the sun-dial of Ahaz go ten degrees backward, and by adding fifteen years to the monarch's life. These are circumstances in the history of the evangelical prophet which show clearly, what was his character, what were his pursuits, and what a moral grandeur was thrown over his whole career.

It has been a matter of doubt how long Isaiah prophesied, and at what period he was translated to the bosom of the Messiah, whose glories he beheld with such ecstasy. It is very clear from his healing of Hezekiah that he lived till the fifteenth year of that monarch's reign. Hence he must have held the prophetic office, at the least, forty-eight years, if he began to prophesy in the year when Uzziah died. But there is every reason for supposing that he survived Hezekiah; as, when the death of that monarch is mentioned in the second book of the Chronicles, it is said "that the rest of his acts, and his goodness,

ISAIAH.

behold, they are written in the vision of Isaiah, in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel." Hence must be admitted the almost universal tradition, that he did not die till the early part of the reign of Manasseh. It is distressing to relate the cruel and agonizing circumstances under which that great, pious, and venerable saint is supposed to have been violently removed from life and duty. He fell upon evil days and evil tongues. The unprincipled and ferocious Manasseh could not endure a great and good man. His sacrifice of innocent blood is upon record. Aged and also quiet as Isaiah must probably have been, still there were an eloquence and power from the prophet's history, life, and prophecies, which must have been full of rebuke to one who was resolved to set at defiance the laws of God and his church. These circumstances lead to the belief, that the body of Isaiah was sawn asunder by the cruel edict of Manasseh; and that the age of the prophet, his long retirement from the busy scenes of life, the profligacy of those times, and the depravity of the king, were the probable reasons why the manner of his death was without a public record. The plea of the abandoned monarch is stated to have been, that Isaiah was guilty of the basest falsehood in asserting that he had seen the Lord sitting on his throne; whereas a passage in Exodus declares, that no man shall see God and live. It is supposed that St. Paul speaks of that prophet's death, when in his epistle to the Hebrews he says, "They were sawn asunder." Now if Isaiah perished in the early part of the reign of Manasseh, he must have prophesied at least sixty-one years. Hence he must have been more than eighty years old, if he entered on his ministry at the age of twenty. But the Oriental Christians maintain, that he died at the advanced period of one hundred and twenty years. Thus perished, in honorable martyrdom, the venerable prince of the prophets.

But he was honored in his death. He was buried in the royal

ISAIAH.

sepulchre at the foot of Mount Zion, in Jerusalem, under the fuller's oak, the oak of Rogel, and near the sacred stream of Siloam. That stream was a spot where he may have often slaked his thirst amidst the heat of summer, the fatigues of duty, and the burning fever of his soul under distress at the sins of Judah. It was a spot where he perhaps had often touched the harp of inspiration, and where its notes had mingled with the music of those flowing waters, and where he may have built the lasting monument of his fame. It was a spot where tradition relates that he supplied his fellow-countrymen, when besieged in the days of Hezekiah, with water from Siloam, which the enemy could not procure. Long after his death, his remains were removed to Paneas, a city of Syria, at the source of the river Jordan; and from thence, in the reign of Theodosius the younger, about 442 years before Christ, they were taken to the city of Constantinople.

Such was the sad end of the most illustrious prophet of God. We must acknowledge him worthy of such a title, if we study the traits of his character. The author of Ecclesiasticus says, "He was great and faithful in his visions; that in his time the sun went backward, and he lengthened the king's life. He saw by an excellent spirit what should come to pass at the last. St. Jerome speaks of him, as conversant with every part of science; and says, that his writings are, as it were, an abridgement of the Holy Scriptures, and a collection of the most uncommon knowledge, of which the mind of man is capable. He was a mighty reformer. With the boldest eloquence he denounced the idolatries and vices of his age, and preached with thrilling energy the doctrines of repentance and righteousness. God was glorified in him by his prophecies and life. He was Judah's counsellor and comforter. He had a zeal in the cause of truth and virtue, which nothing could subdue. His tongue was

IS A I A H.

well called "a sharp sword," for the tones of his indignation at guilt often divided asunder the bones and marrow. He stands pre-eminent for the number of his prophecies, the variety of his subjects, their infinite importance, and the sublime language with which they are clothed. His writings are quoted in the New Testament oftener than those of any other prophet. Our Saviour repeatedly attested to his inspiration; read one of his predictions aloud in the synagogue; and said, that then it received its accomplishment. He is the greatest of prophets, as he unrolled to the world the history of the Messiah; as he has given the strongest of all testimony to the truth of the Divine word; and, as his arguments gather constantly increasing strength and brilliancy from the progress of time. His visions are realities. They seem to be history, rather than prophecy. His description of the sufferings of Christ once converted a most celebrated Jewish Rabbi: brought the treasurer of Ethiopia to faith in the true Messiah; and overwhelmed with its power that reckless libertine, and afterwards remarkable penitent, the Earl of Rochester. When the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah was read to that nobleman, he declared, that the mysteries of the Passion appeared as plain to him, as ever any thing did that was represented in a glass. He begged the passage to be read to him frequently, says his biographer, and was dissatisfied, notwithstanding his great pains and weakness, till he had committed the chapter to memory.

We read with wonder the amount of subjects embraced in the visions of Isaiah. The map of the nations seems to have been before his eyes, with a special volume of the history of each kingdom. He saw the destiny of the ten tribes; the places where they now live; the events which shall develope their localities; and the time when those lost sheep shall return to the house of Israel. The wondrous scenes of Judah's coming history were before him. Assyria, Babylon, Media, Egypt,

Ethiopia, Syria, Damascus, Moab, Persia, Tyre, Nineveh; those and many other kingdoms passed before him for blessing or condemnation. He prophesied of Cyrus by name, two hundred years before his birth; and his predictions, shown to that monarch by Daniel, are supposed to have had an influence on him in releasing the Jews from captivity, and in allowing them to return to Jerusalem and to rebuild their city. Occasional prophecies are thrown out about the Messiah in the first part of his book. The second or latter part seems to be almost wholly devoted to the Messiah. Advanced in years, standing on the verge of the cold dark stream of death, looking with despair on the profligacy that raged around him, seeing nothing in the idolatrous Manasseh to give him comfort, he withdrew his thoughts and affections from a world that was not worthy of him, to dwell on seraphic visions of heaven. The Divine Spirit then took possession of his soul, and led him through all the splendid scenes and glories of the kingdom of the Messiah. He felt and wrote, as if he were in the church of the first-born, and heard hosannas to Jesus from the burning seraphim, and listened to an archangel's eloquence on the stupendous atonement for human guilt by the precious blood of the cross, and saw the Lamb on mount Zion, and actually took his seat at the marriage banquet in heaven.

As the poet says, "Sweet is the harp of prophecy." But never was it more sweet, than when the fingers of the rapt Isaiah flew with exquisite, mellifluous melody over its golden strings. Judah was entranced by his touch. The whole world was captivated by his strains, as if they were the minstrelsy of the celestial courts; and we may well imagine that "E'en listening angels leaned from heaven to hear." His description of Zion's glorious scenes give us a holy ecstasy, and lead us to imagine, that we are translated to the seats of primeval innocence, and to the songs of heavenly harpers.

ISAIAH.

Oh scenes, surpassing fable, and yet true!
Scenes of accomplished bliss! which, who can see,
Though but in distant prospect, and not feel
His soul refreshed with foretaste of the joy!
One song employs all nations: and all cry,
Worthy the Lamb, for he was slain for us.
All saints proclaim Christ king, and in their hearts
His title is engraven with a pen,
Dipp'd in the fountain of eternal love.

Isaiah was a splendid writer. He is full of the boldest imagery, is distinguished for energy and ardor of expression; and no one surpasses him in sublimity. His ode on the fall of the king of Babylon, is perhaps among the grandest poems that ever were written. There are also singular sweetness and beauty in his language, showing him to have been a perfect master of the riches and perfections of the Hebrew tongue. The tones of his harp are all delicious music, and prove that the Divine hand made him "a polished shaft." From our ignorance of the rhythm of Hebrew verse we are unable to say what portion of the writings of Isaiah are poetical; but, from the structure of his language, his highly figurative expressions, and brilliant conceptions, his book often seems to embrace all the elements and graces of poetry. It is peculiarly fitting that his sublime conceptions and themes should be enchased in a corresponding framework of gold and diamonds. His style surpasses that of Grecian or Roman eloquence. No one can realize the full perfection and graces of language, who is not a devoted and familiar student of the visions of Isaiah. This is the Helicenean font from which the Muse must seek her highest inspiration. This is a volume fit to be recommended, as the most finished classical production for the education of the young; a volume where no pagan errors can corrupt the mind, but where every senti-

ISAIAH.

ment and word will exalt the intellect, refine the taste, improve the heart, and purify the morals.

Such is a very imperfect view of the lifetime and writings of the great evangelical prophet. He was a star of the first magnitude in the ancient church of God; and is hailed as the fifth evangelist of the Christian dispensation. He was the polar star for the guidance of his nation; and is the herald star, the bright harbinger of the Prince of peace. The Christian drink sin with rapture his inspired truths; and the scholar enjoys a perpetual banquet in the sublimity of his eloquence. All persons of high and holy feelings revel in his magnificent scenes. What a debt of gratitude we owe him for his wonderful pages! How should we admire the wisdom of God for taking one of royal birth, of the highest powers of intellect, and of the richest attainments of learning, to illustrate and defend Divine truth! How should we admire Isaiah's virtue, that could resist all temptations, rise above the love of pleasure, popularity and worldly glory, to serve a Divine Master in rebuking guilty kings and people; in assailing every species of vice; in exhibiting the majesty of personal holiness; in esteeming the reproach of Christ better than all the treasures of Jerusalem; and in laying down his life in martyrdom! The church can never sufficiently acknowledge his services. His precious book is a gem from the throne of God. Its lustre irradiates all the Scriptures, and is a guide-book to the mysteries of the Christian dispensation. It is the prophet's most glorious monument. How does his life rebuke all who, high in rank and education, live to the world, and not to God! How does his genius, which wrote so sublimely of the Messiah, rebuke those gifted minds, which throw a fascination over error, licentiousness, infidelity, and crime! What a reproach is it to human nature, that the world should not have been worthy of Isaiah, but that he should have fallen a victim to human malice, envy and depravity!

ISAIAH.

Blessed be God for the rich legacy of the evangelical prophet's example, writings, and services to our ungrateful and corrupt world, and especially to the church; and, as Christians, we ought fully to appreciate them, to increase our faith and to strengthen our virtue. Though we deplore his fate, yet we triumph in the assurance that he is enjoying a heavenly recompense; that he now sees face to face the Saviour, whom on earth he only saw in vision; that he is wearing a crown of glory for the torments of martyrdom; and that he is mingling in loud hosannas with the seraphim, to Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever.



EZEKIEL.

BY THE REV. FRANCIS VINTON, D. D.

THE subject of this memoir was aptly named, whether we consider the attributes of his personal character, or the peculiar difficulties of his prophetic office.

He was sent to a people described as “a rebellious nation;” “hard of face, and stiff-hearted.”* And God said to him: “Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads. As an adamant, harder than flint have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house.”†

Accordingly, the prophet was named EZEKIEL—a compound word, signifying the STRENGTH OF GOD; or (whom) GOD WILL STRENGTHEN.

He was born of the sacerdotal order, and is styled “Ezekiel the priest.”‡ By the watchful solicitude of his father, Buzi, he was kept from the contaminating influences of his day, and was trained in the doctrines and practice of holy men of an earlier and better generation.

* Ezek. 2: 3, 4.

† Ezek. 3: 8, 9.

‡ Ezek. 1: 3.

EZEKIEL.

While yet a youth (according to Josephus), he was carried away from Jerusalem among the captives whom Nebuchadnezzar took to Babylon with Jehoiakin king of Judah.

In the fifth year of his captivity, he received his commission as a prophet (B. C. 594); and he prophesied in the country of Mesopotamia "by the river Chebar"—now Khabûr—a stream of some note, running into the Euphrates near Circesium in Central Asia, two hundred miles north of Babylon. On this river, Nebuchadnezzar founded a Jewish colony from the captives which he brought from Jerusalem.

There is some doubt of the precise meaning of the date at which he received his prophetic call. He says it was "in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month." Some critics regard this date as the statement of the prophet's own age at the time of his commission. Archbishop Usher, with Calmet and others, reckon the thirty years from the era when the covenant was renewed with God, in the reign of the good king Josiah (B. C. 623). "The fifth year of the captivity" (B. C. 594) was twenty-nine years after; so that the ancient chronology, we may conclude, brings the question to the same result, and we may consider Ezekiel to have received his office in the thirtieth year of his age.

He continued to prophesy until the twenty-seventh year of the captivity,* during a period of twenty-two years. Jeremiah and Daniel were his contemporaries and fellow-prophets in that woful captivity. But Jeremiah prophesied thirty-four years before Ezekiel, and continued to prophesy six or seven years after him. Most of Daniel's predictions are later. Yet Daniel was of great repute for piety and wisdom, as we learn from the references of Ezekiel to him, with the distinctive eulogium of a proverbial celebrity.

* Ezek. 29: 17.

E Z E K I E L .

“ Though these three men,
Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it,
They should deliver but their own souls
By their righteousness, saith the Lord God.”*

And again, in the sarcasm against the prince of Tyrus:

“ Behold ! Thou art wiser than Daniel ;
There is no secret that they can hide from thee.”†

Among the illustrious contemporaries of Ezekiel, the learned Selden in his work “ *De Diis Syris*,” mentions Pythagoras ; and relates the opinion of some of the ancients, that Nazaratus Assyrius, whom Pythagoras had for his tutor for some time, was no other than Ezekiel the prophet. Be this as it may, we have reason to think that many of the Greek philosophers were informed in the Sacred Scriptures, and borrowed from them some of their best opinions.

Among his own countrymen, it is certain that Ezekiel had great authority, and wielded a commanding influence. This appears from the numerous intimations‡ given us of the coming of the elders to inquire of him. His words were accounted as the oracles of God. But, on that “ rebellious nation,” the words of the prophet fell as the wind on the sea ; troubling the waters and rearing their angry waves with foaming crests, and rolling their roaring surges with threatening fury.

We read a very graphic description of the rising of that tempest, which finally destroyed the prophet with its persecutions. It is God’s forewarning to his servant.

* Ezek. 14 : 14-20. † Ezek. 28 : 3.

‡ Ezek. 8 : 1 ; 14 : 1 ; 20 : 1 ; 33 : 31, 32.

E Z E K I E L .

“Thou son of man, the children of thy people
Still are talking against thee by the walls,
And in the doors of the houses; and speak
One to another, every one to his brother,
Saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word
That cometh forth from the LORD.

And they come unto thee as the people cometh,
And they sit before thee as my people;
And they hear thy words, but they will not do them:
For with their mouth they show much love:—
But their heart goeth after their covetousness.

And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song
Of one that hath a pleasant voice,
And can play well on an instrument:
For they hear thy words, but they do them not.

And when this cometh to pass, (lo! it will come,)
Then shall they know
That a PROPHET hath been among them.”*

The conspiracy eventuated in the prophet's martyrdom. The tradition among the Jews, relates that he was killed by one of the chiefs of his people on account of having reproved him for idolatry; and that he was buried in “the Field of Masur,” in the tomb of Shem and Arphaxad.

This vain attempt to atone for the murderous outrage by an honorable interment of the victim, reminds us of our Lord's most fearful malediction: “Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Truly, ye bear witness that

* Ezek. 33: 30-33.

E Z E K I E L .

ye allow the deeds of your fathers : for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres."*

Concerning the style of the prophecy of Ezekiel, much has been written by distinguished commentators.

It was the opinion of Grotius, that "Ezekiel deserves to be compared with Homer, on account of his beautiful conceptions, his illustrious comparisons, and his extensive knowledge."

Bishop Lowth, in his twenty-six lectures on Hebrew poetry, utters a discriminating eulogy on the characteristic style of Ezekiel's composition, which it may be not unprofitable to transcribe :

"Ezekiel, in sublimity, is not even excelled by Isaiah : but his sublimity is of a totally different kind. He is deep, vehement, tragical : the only sensation he affects to excite is the terrible : his sentiments are elevated, fervid, full of fire, indignant : his imagery is crowded, magnificent, terrific, sometimes almost to disgust : his language is pompous, solemn, austere, rough, and at times unpolished : he employs frequent repetitions, not for the sake of grace or elegance, but from the vehemence of passion and indignation. Whatever subject he treats of, that he sedulously pursues, from that he rarely departs, but cleaves as it were to it : whence the connection is in general evident and well preserved. In many respects he is perhaps excelled by the other prophets ; but in that species of composition to which he seems by nature adapted—the forcible, the impetuous, the great and solemn—not one of the sacred writers is superior to him."

The same learned prelate remarks in another place, that Ezekiel should be oftener classed among the orators than the poets. He notices the frequent rudeness of his periods, but, on the whole, he gives it as his judgment that Ezekiel, in point of style, deserves the same

* St. Luke 11 : 47, 48.

EZEKIEL.

rank among the Hebrews, as Homer and Æschylus hold among the Greeks.

From this high praise, Dathe and Michaelis are the only critics of any eminence (so far as we know) who dissent. Michaelis thinks, that the style of Ezekiel indicates "the old age of Hebrew poetry." But if this be so, it is a fine and vigorous old age, both of language and of composition, that should induce the scholar to trace its youth and manhood with assiduity.

Archbishop Newcome, with great truth and judgment, vindicates the prophet's style. He observes that we ought not to consider Ezekiel as "the framer of those august and astonishing visions and of those admirable poetical representations which he committed to writing: but as the instrument in the hands of God, who vouchsafed to reveal himself, through a long succession of ages, not only in divers parts constituting a magnificent and uniform whole, but also in different manners, as by voice, by dreams, by inspiration, and by plain or enigmatical visions. If he is circumstantial in describing the wonderful scenes which were presented to him in the visions of God, he should be regarded as a faithful representer of the Divine revelations, for the purpose of information and instruction, and not as exhausting an exuberant fancy in minutely filling up an ideal picture.*

We ought to bear in mind that the Holy Ghost did not overrule and alter the natural bent of the mind of the several ministers, whether prophets or apostles, whom He inspired. A rich variety is thus produced in the Sacred Scriptures. Ezekiel, being a youth at the time of his captivity,—a season of life when the imagination runs into luxuriance in men of high endowments,—his natural genius led

* Archbishop Newcome's preface to his translation of Ezekiel, pp. 27, 28.

EZEKIEL.

him to copiousness and amplification, which we may consider one of the characteristics of his style. But that he was capable of a concise and even austere diction, is clearly demonstrated in the seventh chapter of his prophecy. The whole of his writings illustrate the appropriateness of his name, and show how admirably he was endowed, as well by nature as by supernatural gifts, to oppose "the rebellious house," "the people of stubborn front and hard heart." They could not readily mistake his meaning (except when the subject necessarily caused obscurity): for there is no writer, in the whole range of Holy Scripture, the vigor of whose conceptions is verified by statement more intellegible and distinct. Whether the idea be expressed by symbols and symbolic action, or drawn out into allegory, or clothed in enigma, the things seen in prophetic vision are described with a sharpness of outline and minuteness of detail which belong to real existence.

He is like a masterful painter, whose first touches are deliberate strokes, and whose coloring is the reflection of the modesty and harmony of nature; suggesting, not the picture nor the artist, but the scene itself, with all the emotions which would be excited in the observer on beholding it.

There is scarcely one of the sacred writers who furnishes a biographer with fewer materials, wherewith to delineate his personal character, than Ezekiel. We never meet with him as an ordinary man. He always thinks and acts as a prophet. In this characteristic, he differs from his contemporaries, Jeremiah and Daniel, of whose personal history and private emotions we have a copious record, interwoven in their writings.

Nevertheless, we are not entirely excluded from the knowledge which we covet: for through a chasm that rent his heart, we may catch a glimpse, which reveals Ezekiel as a man. This interesting

discovery is made in the brief narrative which he gives of the death of his wife. There is something inexpressibly touching in his statement of his bereavement: "the desire of his eyes taken away with a stroke;" the command, "not to mourn nor weep;" and the simple declaration, "I did as I was commanded."

And while we thus learn that he was a man possessed of exquisite sympathies and affections, a most tender husband and fond lover, with a gentle nature, alive to all the domestic charities of marriage, whose supreme earthly felicity is derived from the society of her to whom his heart was pledged; at the same time we see that he submitted his personal feelings to his prophetic office, with a heroism that is not less admirable than rare.

This is the only memorable event of his personal history which he records; and it is mentioned only in reference to his mission, wherein he himself was made "a sign" unto his nation.

The passage is eminently worthy of being transferred and made the foundation of remarks for our practical improvement.

Also the word of the LORD came unto me, saying:
 Son of man, behold, I take away from thee
 The desire of thine eyes with a stroke:
 Yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep,
 Neither shall thy tears run down.
 Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead,
 Bind the tire of thine head upon thee,
 And put on thy shoes upon thy feet,
 And cover not thy lips and eat not the bread of men.

So I spake unto the people in the morning:
 And at even my wife died:
 And I did in the morning as I was commanded.

E Z E K I E L .

And the people said unto me,
Wilt thou not tell us what these things are to us,
That thou doest so?

Then I answered them ;
The word of the LORD came unto me, saying :
Speak unto the house of Israel, Thus saith
The LORD God :

Behold I will profane my Sanctuary,
The excellency of your strength,
The desire of your eyes,
And that which your soul pitieth :
And your sons and your daughters, whom ye have left,
Shall fall by the sword.
And ye shall do as I have done : ye shall not
Cover your lips, nor eat the bread of men.
And your tires shall be upon your heads,
And your shoes upon your feet.
Ye shall not mourn nor weep :
But ye shall pine away for your iniquities,
And mourn one toward another.
Thus Ezekiel is unto you a SIGN.*

A man that could thus completely subordinate the strongest interests of his individual life to his official duties, commands the reverence of our feeble hearts, and deserves to be looked upon with admiration (to use a commentator's phrase) "as a truly gigantic phenomenon."

But, let us ask ourselves, Is not the example of Ezekiel, in this instance, a pattern for the imitation of the servants of CHRIST? Ought

* Ezek. 24: 15-24.

E Z E K I E L .

not every minister to regard his sacred office as paramount to all private considerations ; and so to fulfil his ministry, that no domestic affliction, no personal interest, no individual concernment whatsoever shall be permitted to interrupt him in the discharge of his official calling ?

Different persons will answer this inquiry with different replies.

One may say, that the entire subordination of private emotions to public duties, implies a violence on nature : for to suppress the feelings utterly, is unnatural.

Human nature under the pressure of sorrow demands the tribute of tears and of mourning. To deny her these amiable tokens of sensibility, is to descend beneath her to the brutes.

Pride, indeed, may successfully resist the natural impulses, and dry up the fountain of human sympathies or repress their outflowing, with its rigid grasp. Hence, it is a point of honor with the savage to utter no cry at torture, and to evince no pain under the pangs of anguish.

The stoic philosopher made it a virtue to be unmoved amidst appalling trials of the nerves, and taught its votaries to overcome the instincts of nature by a will as inflexible as fate. A cruel habit of the mind, acquired by education, may thus prevail, in becoming a second nature ; but the process requires that the sentiments of humanity be first paralyzed, or else that the nerves be transmuted into wires of iron.

So far from admiring such contradiction to the heart, it rather excites disgust. Insensibility to sorrow is disgraceful and not honorable to mankind.

Accordingly, there is no room for admiration of a man who so subdues his private griefs as never to allow them to interrupt his public and official duties.

But another view may be taken of the question. It may be truly affirmed, that the resolute discharge of the functions of an office, while suffering under personal afflictions, by no means indicates a "violence to nature," but rather an exaltation beyond nature; not a sinking beneath her, but a rising above her. Neither may the motive in such case be attributed to "pride," but on the contrary, to a true humility which makes one's *self* of no reputation.* Nor is the process an education which shall teach us to stifle the heart and repress its sensibilities; but the training of the soul to faith in GOD, whereby it learns to "endure as seeing HIM who is invisible."

The transporting power of a new affection may serve to give us victory over affliction, so as to make us, apparently, insensible to pain, while keenly suffering it.

Opposite causes may be productive of the same effects. Ignorance of danger may induce the same hazards as high moral courage, that, knowing the danger, rises superior to fear. A Putnam may venture his life in a wolf-den, because he is insensible to the peril, or because he braves it. Zeno may indurate his nerves until they be past feeling, and so not flinch at pain. St. Paul, with nerves all quivering, may know that Christ's "strength is made perfect in weakness," enabling him to endure the "thorn in the flesh."†

It is one of the mysteries of God's presence and the glory of Christ's religion, that the cross becomes a joy. And the exploits of Christian faith, whereby an apostle was made to rejoice in tribulation, through the power of Christ resting upon him, may be equivalent to the keenest pleasure which the gratification of our natural desires affords.

Although the Christian be enabled to withhold his tears and his mourning while suffering adversity, yet it may not be inferred that his

* Phil. 2: 7.

† 2 Cor. 2: 7-10.

E Z E K I E L .

natural feelings are blunted because he weeps not and mourns not. He is a man of like passions with other men. If the flesh be pinched he smarts. If the heart be wounded he bleeds. "Hath not" he "eyes?" "Hath not he hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same summer and winter," as another man? If children, or a next friend or wife decease, he grieves.

But then his pain is hidden from mortal eye; his groanings are unuttered; his complaints are made unto God, who seeth in secret. Faith curbs the passionate expressions of grief while he calmly ejaculates, "It is the LORD: let Him do what seemeth Him good." "The LORD gave: and the LORD hath taken away: Blessed be the NAME of the LORD."

The arrow that pierces the Christian, hath a point as sharp and a barb as keen as that which pierces another man. But the difference is, that the Christian's faith anoints the feather of the arrow with the balm of resignation, and the Good Physician is at hand to pour into the wound the oil and wine of consolation, that comforts the stricken soul. Therefore, while the cross is ordained to be the unalterable law of the Christian life, at the same time "there should be no greater comfort to Christian persons than to be made like Christ, by suffering patiently adversities, troubles and sickness. For HE himself went not up to joy, but first HE suffered pain. HE entered not into His glory before HE was crucified."*

HE made it his meat and his drink to do his FATHER's will, albeit, "HE was smitten, stricken of God, and afflicted." A tranquil faith sustained him amidst accumulated woes; of which he felt the smarting

* Office of Visitation of the Sick.

more sensitively than any other man, because his sinless humanity was more susceptible than ours in its corruption.

Yet, notwithstanding all his known and his mysterious sufferings, he allowed them to hinder him in no duties, nor admitted them as an apology for intermitting any labors of his love; but "he went about doing good," "leaving us an example that we should follow in his steps."

If, then, Jesus subordinated his personal feelings to his official duties—if he let no private griefs interrupt the continuous discharge of his public ministry—we surely require no further argument for the obligation of similar self-sacrifice on the ministers of Christ in every age.

And the same example is held forth for the imitation of every private Christian also. For each Christian ought to regard his occupation as the calling appointed for him of God. He should, therefore, exercise his vocation as a spiritual calling; rendering his service, always, "to the LORD and not to men." Accordingly private griefs ought not to interfere with any of his daily labors. And most particularly ought he to guard against the influence of a corrupt and worldly fashion, that locks a mourner in his chamber and forbids him to go unto the house of God to worship there.

The conduct of Ezekiel is exemplary. The "desire of his eyes" was "taken away with a stroke," and yet he went forward in the path of duty with unhesitating steps.

The example of David, too, is in point: who, while his child was sick, "fasted and went in and lay all night upon the earth:" but when the child was dead, he arose from the earth and washed and anointed himself; and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the LORD and worshipped: then he came to his own house, and when he required, they set bread before him and he did eat.

“Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child while it was yet alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread.”

“And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.”*

Such was the pious resignation of holy David, “the man after God’s own heart.” And the instruction of David’s Greater Son to his mourning disciples, is significant with admonition to parents who are mourning for their infant children deceased, but assured of salvation in the kingdom of God. “If ye love ME, ye would rejoice; because I said, I go unto the FATHER.”†

Afflictions come from God. They are proofs of his Fatherhood, and tokens of his love. They are the chastisements of his Paternal hand, and serve (as in Ezekiel’s case) to advance the purposes of his wisdom. And “though no chastening is for the present joyous but grievous; yet, nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” “If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons,” “that ye might be partakers of his holiness.”

The Christian life is a paradox. When described, it is full of logical contradictions; but when experienced, it is replete with spiritual harmony and consistency.

The preternatural powers bestowed upon us by the indwelling of “Christ in us,” are enigmatical to the unregenerate mind. These are among “the things hard to be understood,” until revealed by Christ

* 2 Sam. 15: 16-24.

† St. John 14: 28.

E Z E K I E L .

unto his disciples through his manifesting of himself unto them as he doth not unto the world.* They are "things of the SPIRIT of God," which the natural man receiveth not: "they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."†

What logician can reconcile these discordant statements of Christian truth? "I am crucified with CHRIST, nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but CHRIST liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the SON OF GOD, who loved me and gave himself for me."‡

Or what philosophy can account for these statements of Christian experience? "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the LORD JESUS, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death, for JESUS' sake, that the life also of JESUS might be made manifest in our mortal flesh."§

The problem is all explained by the law of the CROSS, as the instrument of our Heavenly Father's chastisement of his children for their sanctification; and by the PRESENCE of the HOLY GHOST forming "CHRIST in us the hope of glory."|| "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."¶

* See St. John 14: 21-23.

† Gal. 2: 20.

|| Col. 1: 27.

‡ 1 Cor. 2: 14.

§ 2 Cor. 4: 8-11.

¶ 2 Cor. 4: 16-18.

E Z E K I E L.

In the church of Christ, since the day of Pentecost, such illustrious examples of suffering saints are most abundant. But in the elder church of Israel, before the incarnation and ascension of our Lord, the instances were rare. And the reason is given by St. John when he says: "The Holy Ghost was not yet, because that JESUS was not yet glorified."*

Although the SPIRIT was doubtless bestowed and never ceased to strive with man from the beginning, yet, we are assured that his gifts and graces were then as nothing compared with the PRESENCE, which, being made manifest after Christ was glorified, on the day of Pentecost, shall continue in the church even unto the end of the world.

Accordingly we are constrained to admire the character of Ezekiel so much the more, inasmuch as he, with spiritual help comparatively less, employed the divine grace so well as to be an example to the Christian, both of faith, and patience, and obedience under a severity of bereavement most insupportable, when God took away from him the desire of his eyes with a stroke; and he neither mourned nor wept, but did as he was commanded. He is, doubtless, one of those "prophets" of whom the apostle to the Hebrews speaks,† who "through faith" "wrought righteousness;" "obtained promises;" "out of weakness was made strong;" "of whom the world was not worthy."

"AND THUS EZEKIEL IS UNTO YOU A SIGN."

We will not dwell on the topic of the subjects of the prophecies of Ezekiel.

They are among the most mysterious of the ancient Scriptures. Some critics have thought that Ezekiel had written two Books of Pro-

* St. John 7: 39.

† Heb. 11: 32.

EZEKIEL.

phesies: the second containing the last nine chapters. But this opinion is opposed by serious difficulties, which we need not here narrate: but refer the student to approved commentators, both for the analysis of the prophecy and for the arguments which sustain it.

It may be well, however, to remark, that the latter part of the prophecy of Ezekiel is confessedly obscure. These predictions relate to the future glorious advent of the Messiah, with power in His kingdom. The closing visions are evidently referred to, though not quoted, in the last chapter of the Apocalypse, by St. John.

The Son of Sirach speaks of Ezekiel by name as one pre-eminent for his gifts of prophecy: "It was Ezekiel who saw the glorious vision which was showed him upon the chariot of the Cherubims."*

The Jewish Rabbis, in view of the mysteries and sublimity of Ezekiel's prophecy, forbade their pupils to enter upon the study of it, until they had reached a maturity of thirty years of age.

We have the assurance of an inspired apostle, that the prophecies (compared with miracles) "are a more sure word, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the Day Star arise in your hearts."† Therefore, no Christian man may question the profit of a devout and studious research of the prophetic writings.

The time is come, when the fulfilment hath made much that was obscure to the fathers, plain to their children: and the time shall come when the mysteries of the portion yet unfulfilled, shall be unfolded, by the event, to our posterity. And when "time shall be no longer," and "we shall know even as we are known," then, looking backward

* Eccclus. 49: 8.

2 Pet. 1: 19.

E Z E K I E L .

upon a remembered world, we shall discover, that the records of prophecy and the events of history are coalesced, united, undistinguishable and the same ; verifying the truth that the LORD JESUS CHRIST is "Head over all things to the church, which is His Body," and hath ordered "all things to work together for good unto them that love God," according to his promise, and demonstrating that PROPHECY was the world's history, written beforehand, by the finger of the OMNISCIENT AND ALMIGHTY God.



J. H. Wood

W. H. Carpenter

M A L A C H I .

BY THE REV. JAMES SCOTT, D. D.

MALACHI is a great historical personage. He stands like a colossus on the brink of that epoch which lies between the prophetic and the apostolic eras. The name is significant and mysterious. It means "my messenger," that is, "Jehovah's messenger." Now this is the very appellation which God has given to the angels, the first-born sons of the morning. Malachi was an angel, who tabernacled on earth for an appointed period and prophesied. He was the last authorized messenger of the Lord to the inhabitants of the earth, during the ancient dispensation. His book is the Apocalypse, and he himself the John of the Old Testament. He carved the last hieroglyphic symbol on the temple ; uttered the last oracular response ; stood on the last lofty battlement of inspiration ; had the last supernatural visions and revelations ; heard the last words of Deity anent the advent of the suffering Messiah ; and was the honored amanuensis whom God intrusted to place the last iota to the ancient Scriptures, and to deposit them in the Holy of Holies, as the sacred, canonical library of the Church. In a word, Malachi was the last man on the Old Testament scroll of patriarchs and prophets. He and Adam are at

M A L A C H I.

the two extremes of the dispensation, preceding the incarnation of the Messiah.

The world was ripe for the appearance of Malachi. The fulness of his time was come. The divine occasion for his mission, may be seen by a single glance at the history of his generation. Nor are the memorials few of that remote era. The deciphering of the Persian inscriptions on the rocks of Behistun, and the excavations at Nineveh, are reclaiming to veritable history immense tracts of that period. India, Persia, Phenicia, Greece, Judea, and Egypt, were all in a peculiar state when he arose; and he stands up on the map of that day, as a great gnomon, which reflected the shadow of God over these nations. All things were ready for his mission.

The sepulchres of some seventy generations of our race lie between his times and ours. Nor can we obtain a distinct and palpable panoramic view of them, unless we go back in imagination over at least twenty-three centuries. We must go back to a period, when Europe and America were being cradled by the hymns of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, and waiting for the star of their destiny to arise and shine; to a period, when there was no *Christian Church*; no New Testament written; no incarnate God; no history of Calvary; and to a period anterior to all the profane literature now extant, with a single exception or two. The brush of oblivion must erase from the map of the world, all the generations of men, which have lived during the eventful period of the twenty-three preceding centuries; all the monuments which intellect has erected; all the discoveries which science and necessity have brought to view; and every memorial of man built on the earth during that time. To the Bible reader Malachi stands on the utmost foothold of the promontory which belonged to the former economy. He stands forth as the last prophet of the ante-Messiah dispensation. He looms up before the eye of the imagi-

M A L A C H I.

nation, like a vast human statue, on the opposite shores of the ocean, which rolls between his times and the apostolic era. He lived a century before Alexander, Aristotle and Plato.

In the days of Malachi, Persia was the overshadowing empire of the earth. Shushan was the metropolis of the empire. Three rivers commingle near this political centre, and fall into the Persian Gulf on the Indian Ocean. The great water gateway into that empire was through the Persian Gulf. The first river to the right after reaching the head of the Gulf was the Ulai, famous as the scene of Daniel's interviews with the angel Gabriel. Up this river a short distance lie now the ruins of Shushan. A little above where the Ulai falls into the Gulf, the Tigris and the Euphrates meet and form a sort of delta. The river Tigris is on the right in ascending the Gulf, and on the banks of the river, a short distance above the point of confluence, lie the ruins of Nineveh, now in the process of exhumation. On the left, and up the "great river Euphrates," lie the ruins of Babylon. These three rivers are typical of the three streams of emigration which went out into the world from that centre. There is no portion of the earth, Palestine excepted, where so much glory yet lingers as around the junction of these rivers. It is the native land of Abraham and Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Leah, and other undying names.

Malachi rises up like another Ararat, overshadowing all that land. It is impossible at this date to give the geographical boundaries of the one vast empire, whose capital at one time was Babylon, at another Nineveh, and last at Shushan. In the days of Malachi it had no clearly defined boundaries: it had no limits on the west but the boundless desert of Arabia: nor on the east, for all Persia and India belonged to it: the south was all sea and ocean; for no compass then had ever steered over the Indian and Pacific Oceans: to the north the

M A L A C H I.

empire lost itself in the Black and Caspian Seas. In speaking of Babylonia in the days of Malachi, we can only think of a centre of sovereignty, seated at the head of the Persian Gulf, and extending indefinitely in every direction.

The *times* of Malachi were most eventful. The Babylonian empire, which at that day had its capital at Shushan on the Ulai, was in its utter dotage and old age. Greece, the parent of commonwealths, was but an infant, and awaited the birth of Alexander to enter on the conquest of the world. The shadow of its future greatness began to appear. The battle of Marathon had been fought and won by Greece. Palestine, which had been illustrious for more than a thousand years, for poets, prophets, statesmen, warriors, and above all for its pure religion and divine manifestations, had just been restored to its second nationality and independence. Ezra, the second Moses, had just been recalled to heaven. But before he died, he completed the sacred library which Moses had begun a thousand years before. It is not improbable that Moses edited Shem's history of the creation, Noah's history of the deluge, Abraham's family memoirs, and Jacob's history of Providence. Joshua endorsed the Pentateuch as Moses left it, and added his own book to the catalogue. Hezekiah added the Proverbs, the Book of Ecclesiastes, the Psalms, the Book of Job, and the Prophecy of Isaiah. It was left for Ezra the scribe to collate every thing inspired and written before and during his day. It was also his province to write the history of the great revolution which led to the emancipation of his nation; especially the history of the seventy years' captivity; the account of the building of that second temple, which was "to be more glorious than the first;" and the history of the resettlement of Palestine. When he had done this he died. Nor will these pillars of truth, which he put up in the Church of the living God, ever be taken down. Every thing was ripe for

M A L A C H I.

Malachi. Hence, we find him appearing on the stage of action with the view of sealing up the dispensation. His great mission seems to have been to announce to the nation and to the world, that no prophet would be seen on the earth, until the Messiah had become incarnate.

There never was such a fitness in the condition of the Hebrew people for the advent of the last prophet, as when Malachi appeared. Palestine had been purged and purified by the long captivity. The besom of desolation had swept over it. It had been resently resettled and repeopled. The moral and mental influence of the great revival in religion lay all over it like the dewy mantle of evening. There had been several reformatory eras in the Jewish Church. One in the days of Moses; another in the times of Solomon; and a third in the days of Josiah; but none of them, however, were so remarkable and thorough as the one in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. One of the great items of reform related to that of marriage. There never were so many divorces granted by any government, as in the early part of Nehemiah's administration. Thousands of mothers were divorced in one day, for the purpose of keeping the Hebrew nation pure. This was necessary in a dispensation which depended on the birth of a certain child, in a certain family and tribe, and at a certain period—the child Jesus. A great reform, too, had taken place in relation to the sanctification of the Sabbath day. It would have been well for the Christian and Jewish world, if this reform had been maintained by all succeeding statesmen. It is one of the questions of the nineteenth century, which is yet to be discussed and settled before religion shall cover the earth as the waters cover the deep. Religion must have a time as well as a place for its ordinances. Great prominence, too, had been given to the doctrine of benevolence. Nehemiah, as the ruler of the Theocracy, enforced all these reforms. Ezra died on the

M A L A C H I.

very eve of that memorable reformation : Malachi appeared in about half a century after him. Short, too, as the period was, in which there was no prophet, no small amount of error and declension in piety had begun to flow in : the shadow of a coming age of impiety began to loom up over the entire nation. It was a fit time for Malachi to arise and prophesy.

There is no memorial left on earth to tell any thing about the *genealogy* of this wonderful man : this last of the Old Testament seers : even his birth-place is unknown. He is another Melchisedec. The names of his father and mother are unknown. No family circle appears to have been ennobled by their connection with him. It was no part of God's purpose in raising him up to perform his work, to give earthly honors to any person through him. It is a remarkable incident in human history that the greatest poets, philosophers, patriots, and divines, have left but few on the earth to inherit their names and honors. No man can tell where Malachi was born, who were his parents, whether he left sons and daughters behind him, where he died and was buried. Even his very existence has been disputed. He has been declared to be Ezra. Greater liberties have been taken with him than with Junius ; but no biblical scholar now has any doubt about his personality ; for his real identity and appropriate name are settled facts in sacred history.

His *character* was one of great *spirituality*. He is only known to us as the messenger of Jehovah. God has given us the distinct outlines of his soul. He appears to us as a voice crying aloud to the inhabitants of *Palestine*. There were two reforming agencies established in Israel : the one was external and civil, the other internal and spiritual. In the days of Saul and David, who took charge of the outward reforms, Samuel and Nathan were occupied with the internal and spiritual. Hezekiah and Josiah were engaged with the external,

MALACHI.

while Isaiah and Jeremiah labored day and night for the spirituality of the nation. Nehemiah was the elector of Saxony, the Cromwell, and the William of Orange; while Ezra and Malachi were the Luthers, Calvins, and Knoxes. Ideas never perish. They circulate from soul to soul, and go down from generation to generation. Who is prepared to deny that the ideas of Nehemiah became those of Cromwell, and the ideas of Ezra and Malachi became those of the great reformers?

Although there are no memorials extant concerning the development of Malachi's character, still it cannot be doubted but that God *educated* him for his mighty mission. Moses was prepared for his work by a vision of the burning bush, and an interview with Deity. Elijah was educated for his work at the brook CHERITH, where he was for months miraculously fed by ravens every morning and evening. Elisha was inducted into his office, by the mantle of Elijah falling upon him from the sky, out of the whirlwind. Isaiah, by a vision of the great white throne and the train of seraphim, one of which touched his sinful lips with a live coal from off the altar in heaven, and baptized him with fire. Jeremiah was fitted for his work by means of the significant visions in his boyhood of an almond-tree, and a seething-pot. Ezekiel, by the vision of the wonderful wheel of Providence at the river CHEBAR. No doubt every prophet was fitted for his work by God, and in the way best adapted to his character, temperament, and mission. God's resources are infinite. It may be that there was no outward manifestation given to Malachi, inasmuch as he was the last of the old seers and the herald of the new economy. Perhaps "the still small voice" spoke audibly to him from the depths of his inspired soul.

The *mental characteristics* of Malachi shine forth from the pages of his prophecy, like the furniture of an apartment in the suspended

mirror. He was a veritable prophet. He set Jehovah always before him. His sanctified intellect was of the highest order. His imagination was bold, lofty, and tender. At one time he soars like an eagle among the clouds, stars, and boundless empyrean: at another, he is like the nightingale which fills the bowers of love and beauty with pathetic minstrelsy. There is not any thing finer in the whole volume of inspiration, than his description of Messiah:—"The Sun of righteousness shall arise, with healing in his wings." May not the winged globe of the Egyptians be a material symbol of the Messiah? What pen has given a more graphic sketch of *desolation* than Malachi's? "I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness." The scene haunts the memory like a spirit of evil. Just think of the Eastern mountains and valleys, shorn of their herbage and beauty, and made the haunts of the unearthly Dragon. His ability to describe is wonderful. His portraiture of the great day of the Lord is calculated to fill every soul with horror! "For behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave neither root nor branch." But he could dip his pen in dew as well as in the storm-cloud. He had visions of God's mercy as well as of his wrath. Hear him when his soul was melted with a sense of the divine tenderness for sinners: "I have loved you, saith the Lord." "Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts." He had seraphic conceptions of Jehovah's compassion: "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." He had noble views of God's benevolence and largess: "Prove me whether I will not open to you the windows of heaven and pour down blessings without measure." He had sublime and filial views of God:

“Have we not all one Father?” Is there a finer picture than this hung up on the walls of time? With one dash of the pen he has finished a family painting, on which redeemed man will look with profound pleasure through the endless duration of a future Eternity. “Have we not all one Father?”—what a family circle! God at the head of it! He has given us one view of God which is perfectly glorious. We cannot read it without having our imagination put on fire; nay, we almost hear the pen of the recording angel running over the pages of the book of remembrance. This is it: “Then those who feared God spake often to one another, and the Lord attended and heard; and a book of remembrance was written before him, for those who feared God, and who thought of his name.” Who is capable of computing the amount of positive pleasure this one passage has given to those “of whom the world was not worthy, who wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens, and caves of the earth?”

Every page of the prophecy of Malachi sets forth that he was a spiritual man, and that he had pure and holy views of God. Thus he speaks of God: “He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.”

Malachi had a correct conception of the scheme of mercy, and a comprehensive view of the covenant of grace: “My covenant was with him of life and peace.” He relied on the merits of the great Trustee for man: “Even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in; behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts.” He manifestly foretold the coming of the Elder Brother of the Church: “The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple.” He felt the need of God’s becoming incarnate. He must have cried to God in the language of the Canticles: “O that thou wert as my brother!”

The mission of Malachi was to foretell the advent of Christ and

MALACHI.

his harbinger John the Baptist. He seems to have looked over the gulf of four centuries, and to have seen on the other side of it two personages; the one running as a herald before the other, and crying as he went, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, prepare ye the way of the Lord!" He saw, too, lying away in advance of these two personages, a nation in ruins. Ezekiel saw only a valley filled with dead bones; but Malachi saw an empire buried—the temples, palaces, and wealth all buried. He saw the tomb of Palestine, and the Hebrew nation. Over it he beheld, too, the raven of desolation flapping its funereal wings. It is a remarkable fact that the prophets had no conception of time: they saw objects in space, and the future always appeared to them as a shifting panorama. Hence Malachi looked away beyond the sepulchres of twelve generations, and saw John the Baptist and Christ. The horizon beyond them looked beautiful as the morning.

Malachi introduced his prophecy concerning the coming of John the Baptist and Messiah by reminding the Hebrews, that it was the same God who was to be incarnate, that had guarded them through all their eventful history, and against whom they had so grievously transgressed. His inquiry was, how would they meet this incarnate God unless they repented. He said to them that he saw from the mountain-top of prophecy the desolation of the Hebrew nation; the abrogation of the ceremonial dispensation; and the introduction of a new and more glorious era, in which all the nations of the earth rejoiced. The Shechinah, which centuries before had departed from the temple, he saw in prophetic vision incarnate and filling the temple with a new glory: the "Voice" which Adam heard walking in the garden of Eden: the Angel which spoke to Moses out of the burning bush: the Divinity that was enshrined in the pillar of cloud and fire: the Shechinah—the second person of the Godhead, was to become incarnate.

MALACHI.

Malachi had revelations from the Almighty touching the advent of "the Lord our righteousness." There can be no doubt but he had visions of Calvary; and of the finished work.

The *intent* of prophecy and of sacred history were complete in Malachi. When he died there was no inspired man raised up on earth for four hundred years. The guardian angels who walked on earth, held no colloquies with man; nor were there any oracular dreams given from the sky during that period. But the God of the Church is also the God of the world; hence, we find him raising up Herodotus about that time, the father of reliable history; so that the world might not be in utter darkness. Malachi put the last line and the last word to the Old Testament. He was the last amanuensis which Jehovah employed until the incarnation, and accomplishment of the great Calvary work. Earth had no prophet for four centuries, no ambassador commissioned from the courts of heaven. It was a dreadful interregnum. These four hundred years lie like an impassable desert, or a dead sea, between the old and the new dispensation. There are no moons, no stars, no suns casting light on that vast tract of years. It was befitting that a gulf should lie between the last scene of the old dispensation, and the manifested God. As the valley of death lies between time and eternity, so these four centuries lie between the dispensation of types and prophets; and the dispensation of the Gospel and the Apostles. The prophecy of Malachi is the apocalypse of the Old Testament, and the prophet himself, the last inspired man that stood on the outer edge of the old dispensation. He threw a rainbow over the abyss of years lying between his own times and those of John the Baptist, which shines more gloriously at the distance of twenty-three centuries, by the beams of the arisen "Sun of righteousness."

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Wainwright, Jonathan Mayhew, *bp.*, 1752-1854, *ed.*

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235 p. front., plates. 28 $\frac{1}{2}$ cm.

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